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BY
FRED MAC ISAAC

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The opening story in the next issue of THE POPULAR—September 7th, will be a novel by our old friend Holman Day. "South o' The Wolves" will be a welcome, late-summer story, for it takes the reader to the cool waters off Maine and Nova Scotia, where those two favorite characters, "Scotty" and Ben Tuzzer, reappear to figure as the doughty heroes of this sea-adventure yarn.

Volume LXXXV

T W I C E - A - M O N T H

Number 3

The Popular Magazine

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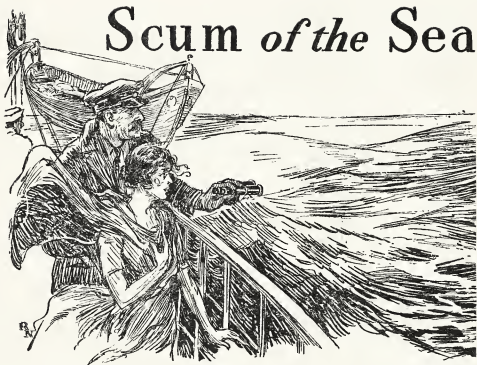
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Author of "Marching Men,"

With two lovely women for passengers, but with her officers unaware most low-down, vicious seamen living, the freighter *Cannonmore*

CHAPTER I.

UNEXPECTED PASSENGERS.

MIDAFTERNOON in the Bay of Bengal; in the west the sun blazed like a bonfire and, with unerring aim, played its heat rays upon the steamship *Cannonmore*, which lay at anchor about half a mile from shore. From huge native lighters on either side, a swarm of brown men were languidly transferring bales of jute to the steamer's hold.

From the mouth of the river a tug was emerging with another lighter in tow, which would be the last, as the ship was almost loaded. Twelve miles up the river lay the city of Cittagong, a slumberous port teeming with dirt and fever. There was enough water in the river to float a fair-sized freight steamer all the way to the city, but Captain Goodwin of the *Cannonmore*, who had entered the river

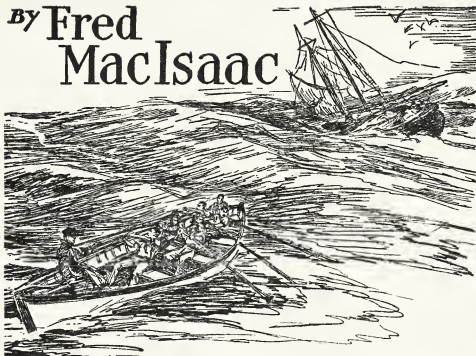
light, had no wish to perch on a bar when heavily laden. He had floated down from the city with half a cargo, and instructed the stevedore to send the remainder out in lighters.

Having dropped anchor and instructed his officers to watch the barometer assiduously, he went back to Cittagong, and made himself comfortable upon the porch of the British clubhouse.

It was steaming hot on the *Cannonmore*, the steel decks of which would have burned holes in sole leather; yet barefoot natives passed over them without seeming to be scorched.

Amidship, where the saloon deck house was placed—the *Cannonmore* was a modern freighter—the heat was horrid, but less unbearable because an awning supplied enough shade to keep the thermometer from bursting and to shelter the officers. Second Officer Krebs, a thin, weather-shriveled man of thirty-five, with

By Fred MacIsaac



"The Rebellious Pawn," Etc.

that she would soon have others, including a rescued crew of the shoved off from Cittagong and headed out into the Indian Ocean.

a drooping brown mustache, and the inscrutable or wooden expression of a Briton who follows the sea, lay in a low cane-bottom deck chair, pulling on a huge porcelain pipe. He was dressed in a pair of soiled duck trousers and a sleeveless shirt, and was perspiring freely.

There was a stir inside the deck house, and a strong, untrained baritone voice was lifted in song. It was the absurd, pseudo-patriotic air from "Iolanthe," which begins:

"When Britain really ruled the waves,
In good Queen Bess' reign,"

and goes on to praise the House of Lords for always, in great national emergencies, "doing nothing in particular and doing it very well." The performer sang all three stanzas; and Krebs endured in silence; but when the singer undertook to give himself an unasked encore, the second officer ripped out an oath:

"Confound you, Williams, stow it. Of all the asinine, senseless——"

A tall, broad-shouldered, blond youth, with a square jaw and laughing blue eyes, showed himself in the doorway. He, also, was comfortable in torn, dirty trousers, bare feet, and a wisp of a shirt. "Are you criticizing me, or my song?"

"Both."

Williams clapped his hands sharply, which brought the steward's Chinese boy on the run.

"Mr. Krebs is down," he explained. "Bring brandy, soda, two tumblers. Savvy?"

"Me savvy," answered the grinning Celestial, who vanished.

Williams, who was chief officer, pulled up another chair, and squatted.

"What's the trouble, old man?" he asked.

"John," demanded the second, removing the pipe from between his teeth, to

make himself clear, as it were, "did it ever occur to you that a man, who, out of all the trades in the world, deliberately chooses the sea as a profession, must be one of the most sublime asses in the universe?"

The chief officer chuckled:

"Wonderfully well put—sentiment incontrovertible; but why bother about it now? I always said you were an ass."

"Don't you agree with me?"

"Well, I have noticed that there are a lot of fools following the sea, usually managing to be the skippers of steamers on which I have to serve."

"I'm serious," growled Krebs. "To think of a man giving up what the shore has to offer, for this——" He waved his hand to include the burnished sea, the burning sun, the natives, and the low, uninviting shore line. "John, we've cheated ourselves out of the good things of life. Who really cares for a sailor?"

"Well," smiled Williams, "I know a little girl who——"

"And what have you got to offer her?" Marriage? She'll be alone eleven months in the year. Think of that."

"Think of the joy of returning home to a loving wife, after a long voyage."

"Look at me," said Krebs, "thirty-five years of age, strong and sound, warranted to be a kind, faithful husband, generous and trusting. Why ain't I got a wife and a crew of children? Because I never had time to get acquainted with a proper girl. I get a month's leave, and two weeks are gone before I run across one that hits my eye; another week is lost getting acquainted. I'm a bashful man, and I never could propose to a girl in a fortnight, so back I go to my ship without saying a word and when I look her up the next year she's married."

WITH a tinkle of ice against glass, the boy set their drinks on the table, and carried it within reach of the first officer.

Williams lifted his glass to his friend, after Krebs had reached for his drink.

"My sympathies," he said. "I know how you feel. I used to long for a sweetheart, yet be suspicious of the girls I met but now—why, she says a single day

with me is worth a lifetime with any other man. When I get my ship we'll marry. There's another girl somewhere for you, so cheer up. Hello, that big sampan is heading this way."

"That's the Old Man in it, with the umbrella over his head," said Krebs. "Now, I wonder what brings him out in the heat of the day. The glass is steady."

Williams walked to the rail and gave the skipper, a fat, red-faced-veteran with a wheezy breathing apparatus, a hand to the deck.

"Everything all right?" demanded Captain Goodwin.

"Yes, sir."

Drawing a handkerchief as big as a tablecloth from his hip pocket, the skipper wiped the perspiration from his round face, and looked a trifle embarrassed.

"Ahem," he began. "It's like this, lads. We're going to have passengers to New York."

He knew his announcement would provoke protests, and he tried to frown them down. The *Cannonmore* was a freight ship with no accommodations for passengers and a board-of-trade regulation against carrying them, but there are methods of evading regulations. The two officers knew without his telling them that they were to be turned out of their comfortable cabins.

"Passengers!" exclaimed Krebs, in deep disgust.

"Missionaries!" hazarded Williams, equally cast down.

"Eurasians!" prophesied Krebs. "I'll not turn out for them."

"Grace at meals. Evening prayers," groaned Williams.

"Captain," pleaded Krebs, "as a favor let me join the lascar mess."

"Pooh," snorted the skipper. "Krebs, you may be so mean a Christian you can't abide missionaries, but you're too good a Christian for the lascars to stomach."

"How many are there?" asked Williams, with a sigh.

"Two, and they're not missionaries, nor Eurasians. They're ladies."

The consternation at this news caused the skipper to rather lose heart. Male passengers were bad enough, for, aside from forcing his two officers to bunk

together, they would not affect the life of the ship; but the presence of ladies meant a revolution. No longer could the officers go about their work dirty and half clad; uniforms must be dug out of lockers, shirts and collars must be worn, the ship must be thoroughly cleaned and the man-talk of the officers would have to be considerably modified.

"Two American ladies—mother and daughter—and the mother is a fine-looking woman, and the daughter is a beauty," the skipper informed them, then retreated, shaking with laughter.

The passengers came aboard in the early evening. Krebbs and Williams, grumbling much, had packed their duds and left their cozy rooms, which opened into the small saloon, and had moved farther aft, taking the room of the third, and forcing him into the quarters of the reluctant chief engineer, who was good natured only when sober, which was almost never.

Although they grumbled, they were rather elated, for young men, who had been cooped for months upon a steel tub with no opportunity to mingle with pretty girls, naturally appreciated the coming of a young and pretty woman, if she turned out to be such. As Goodwin was something of a wag, neither of the officers would have wagered a shilling that she would not be as homely as a hedge fence; yet they hoped.

AS the ladies were American, Williams looked around for a picture of President Wilson—this tale dates back to the days before the World War. Wilson was newly elected, and not yet the most famous man in the world. He failed to find Wilson, but in a copy of the London *Graphic* he discovered a picture of ex-President Roosevelt in hunting garb which he tore out and pasted in a conspicuous place on the saloon wall. Captain Goodwin bustled out of his cabin, clean shaven and natty in his best uniform.

"We dress for dinner, lads, from now on," he commanded. "We'll show the ladies that there is style on the *Cannonmore*, even if she isn't a passenger liner."

The officers sullenly pulled starched shirts over their chests, and white col-

lars were buttoned around their sore, sun-burned necks.

When the heavy sampan with the passengers and their luggage worked its way alongside, every white man on board, except one, was as near the accommodation ladder as respect for the skipper would permit.

"Careful ladies, careful," the captain warned. "Now, one step more. Welcome on board the *Cannonmore*."

Both ladies were flowing white stuffs and heavy white veils to protect them from the sun, perhaps to hide them from curious eyes. One of them—the mother, no doubt—was plumper than the other, and Krebbs and Williams could see a pair of black eyes flashing behind the veil of the younger.

As the skipper led the ladies through the saloon entrance, the two officers walked a few paces aft. There Williams drew a coin from his pocket.

"Heads," called Krebbs.

"Tails it is."

"Just my luck," grumbled the second officer. "See here. I thought you had a girl."

"Weel, weel, if they're not tossin' a coin for hand o' the young leddy! Sich assurance! Boys, I'm werra sorry, but ye'll have tae count me in."

Duncan, the chief engineer, with a leer in his red-rimmed eyes, whiskers untrimmed, uniform awry—for he had been taking advantage of the anchorage to tank up—had thrust himself between them.

"Nothing of the kind," Williams retorted indignantly. "You drunken old goat, we're just matching to see who'll stand watch during dinner and who'll dine with the passengers. You don't fit, at all."

"Ye may have a slight—hic—advantage o' me at the start, but I'm the verra deevil with the leddies."

"Bah! Go fix your uniform and get a shave, or the skipper will deevil you."

"I'll put on me kilts," threatened Duncan, as he rolled off toward his quarters.

"Williams, lad," cautioned Krebbs, "I don't think it's proper for an engaged man to take such an interest in another girl."

"Never mind, old man," laughed Wil-

liams. "I'll fix it with the third to stand dinner watch. He's gray haired and married."

Presently the steward's boy with a Chinese gong appeared on deck and banged out the dinner call. Around the charcoal fire, built on the steel deck forward, the lascar crew assembled and ate the rice and stew which their cook ladled out to them, the more joyously, for the lightermen watched their feast with envious eyes. Miserable as is the lot of a lascar sailor, there are grades of misery; and, to the half-starved longshoremen, it was a fine thing to be a mariner who drew big wages, worked little, and ate meat every day, while *they* toiled under the sizzling sun, with only a few grains of rice to sustain them. However, the lascars were "dogs of Mohammedans, accursed beasts," whom the good Buddhists who loaded the ship hated heartily.

If it were not for the religious hatreds of India, England could not rule it with a handful of white residents.

In the tiny, stifling hot saloon the captain was introducing his officers.

"Mrs. Warrington and Miss Warrington, let me present my first and second officers—fine boys, both of them. If they don't make this a pleasant trip for you, I'll keelhaul them."

Both men were tongue-tied in the presence of so much loveliness. Mrs. Warrington was a stunning woman of forty-five, with dark eyes like her daughter. The men would have admired the mother more if the daughter were not present, but, as the sun extinguishes the moon, so the blazing beauty of Miss Warrington put her parent in the shade. She wore a long gown of dark-red satin, which contrasted superbly with her Spanish coloring. Her head was small and held high, and upon it were piled masses of hair as black as ink and as lustrous as polished ebony. Her large eyes were dark as her hair, with pin points of flame at the back of the pupils. Her smile was brilliant as a perfectly formed mouth and two rows of ivory white teeth could make it, and her skin, despite her hair and eyes and residence in the tropics, was fair, without a touch of freckle or tan.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Williams to him-

self, as he gazed at her. "What a ripping beauty! But what is she doing on a packet like this?"

Krebbs was stricken dumb, naturally, but he recovered enough as they took their seats, to whisper:

"Williams, remember you're engaged."

"I'll try not to forget," the first officer said aloud, but his eyes were already disloyal.

"Ladies," explained Captain Goodwin, from the head of the table, "on these cargo hookers we get very tired of one another's society after six months or so, and you are certainly going to brighten things up for us. The ship is yours, and every man on it your devoted slave." With this extravagant statement, he bowed, and took a huge swallow of hot soup.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN IN THE COAL BUNKERS.

WILLIAMS, the first officer, had managed to secure a seat at the right of the daughter, Miss Warrington, at dinner.

"Have you been long in India?" he asked.

"Too long," she answered, in a voice which was low and singularly sweet. "Over a year. I never hated a country so."

"I can imagine more pleasant residences than Cittagong."

She smiled at the implied question.

"No, we didn't live there. We arrived only a few days ago. We have been staying in Simlow, a village some distance inland, with a girlhood friend of my mother's."

He was blushing at her easy comprehension of his effort to secure information.

"I hope you will pardon my rudeness. I should not have asked questions."

"Why not? Your curiosity is quite natural. Scene: farthest India; appear two lone and unprotected females—Americans, to make it more mysterious. Why do they take passage on a freight ship, instead of going to Calcutta and booking on one of the palatial liners? I'll tell you, if you don't reveal it to your friend, who is watching us so closely. It's because this way is cheaper."

"I hope you will find it more pleasant, also," he replied, "and I won't tell a soul." He laughed, a trifle self-consciously.

"Oh, my, yes," Mrs. Warrington was saying. "India is a delightful country. Still, captain, there are so many insects and snakes and natives and—things."

Krebbs, who had been trying to muster up enough courage to burst into the conversation, saw his opportunity.

"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home," he declaimed loudly.

"Indeed, yes," agreed Mrs. Warrington, turning her shoulder to the captain, and smiling warmly upon the second officer. "Now, there are no snakes in New York or insects, except mosquitoes and bed—"

"Mother," warned her daughter.

"Now, what's the use in being squeamish, my dear? I believe in calling things by their right names."

"Right you are, madame," said the captain heartily. "But you haven't left the snakes and insects behind you. We've got a fine assortment of pythons and cobras forward, going out to an animal importer in New York, and as for insects, well—"

"Captain," suggested the first officer, "why not let the ladies discover a few things for themselves?"

Dinner over, the women rose with a rustle of silk, and retired to their state-rooms, while the second officer hurried off to relieve the third.

"A fine pair," declared Goodwin enthusiastically.

"A glorious girl. But what do you suppose made them ship with us, really?"

"Well," replied the skipper, "we may learn before the voyage is over."

When the ladies came to breakfast next morning, the steamer was well out to sea, the captain and second officer were asleep in their cabins, and the chief walked the bridge in solitary dignity. The third, a grizzled and silent veteran of the sea, was so greatly embarrassed when they nodded to him and took their seats, that he answered their questions in monosyllables, and bolted his food in his anxiety to escape from their overpowering presence.

Eager, themselves, to get on deck, the two women ate hurriedly, and soon left the table. A gentle breeze was sweeping the ship. It was cooler than it had been the night before; the sea was like a mirror with a blue surface, while the sun in the high east was still good humored.

"Isn't this delightful!" exclaimed the girl, as she sank, with a sigh of contentment, in a long ship chair.

"I suppose so," agreed the other lady, rather plaintively. "But I'm so worried over the future, Florence, that I can't see beauty in anything."

"Cheer up, mother; the future will take care of itself. Think of being at sea, going home, leaving all that behind us. The future may have pleasant things in store for us. Who knows but you may marry the captain, who is evidently much taken with you."

"Don't joke on such a subject, child; it doesn't become you. Besides, the captain is already married. The second officer told me so."

Florence threw back her head and laughed with delight, a laugh which tinkled musically in the ears of the man on the bridge.

Leaning back, watching the sea through half-closed eyes, they took no thought of the speeding minutes, and two hours passed rapidly. The ocean has a curious effect on women, for it can still the tongue of the most voluble, and soothe the most nervous into lying immovable for hours in a deck chair, regarding its beautiful monotony.

Men seem less affected by the tranquil influence of the ocean; they yield less readily to its soporific suggestion, and pace the decks and seek things to do, or sit beside peaceful women and, from sheer cussedness, prod them into mental activity.

Despite the calm which prevailed, in which a great liner would have been motionless as a church on shore, the *Canonmore* was rolling very gently in response to the ocean swell. She was just a tramp steamer of some four thousand tons, and very light, although she was laden with bales of jute—bulky, but not heavy cargo.

Finally Captain Goodwin came on deck; and the third officer ascended to the bridge, which enabled Williams to descend and join the group at the cabin entrance. It was his first close-up of Florence Warrington under the glaring lamp of the sun, and he realized that she was less youthful and carefree than she had appeared the night before, though her beauty was no illusion of the oil lamp and the moon. The captain was whispering compliments into the ear of the mother, while Florence exerted herself to chatter with the good-looking chief officer.

On the quiet broke the mellow sounds of the ship's bell—one—two—three—four.

"Ten o'clock, ladies," said the skipper.

THEN, from the engine-room entrance, shouts came—the noise of a fracas, the jabbering of lascars, the high-pitched voice of Duncan, and a wicked stream of curses in a deeper tone.

The company manners of Captain Goodwin dropped from him.

Like a jack-in-the-box suddenly released, he sprang up, opened his mouth, and emitted a roar like an angry lion.

"Avast that racket!" he bellowed, then bounded toward the engine-room entrance, followed by the chief officer, as a group tumbled out on deck. For a moment there was a strange jumble of arms and legs, mostly brown, but containing some white ones. It consisted of Duncan, one of the junior engineers, and half a dozen lascars, who were reducing to submissiveness a scarecrow which proved to be a white man, his face smeared with coal dust, his clothes in tatters.

Duncan disentangled himself from the mass, and greeted the skipper cheerfully.

"It's naything at a', captain, save a dirty stowaway we hauled out o' the coal bunkers. He's a white man, more's the pity."

The stowaway climbed upon his feet, and looked about dazedly. Then his eyes fell upon the two ladies, so white and cool, standing some twenty feet away and wavering between disgust and sympathy at his appearance, and a spasm of rage crossed his face. Two natives were hold-

ing him by the arms, but he suddenly wrenched himself free and, as the lascar headman or "serang" sprang forward to seize him, he stepped back, measured the distance, and met the plunging East Indian with a right hook which knocked the man flat on his back.

"Keep your hands off me, you black beast!" he snarled, then faced the other lascars who were creeping in. The serang was crouching on his hands and knees, a long knife appearing in his right hand, but as he was about to spring, the chief officer stood between him and the stowaway, grasped his wrist, and tore the knife from his hand.

"Back, serang," he said quietly. "The man shall be punished. Take your men away. We can handle this fellow." He returned the knife to the serang, who then drew off his men. Williams seized the stowaway by the arm and whispered:

"You blasted fool! Have you lived in the East and not learned to keep your hands off these people?"

"I had to protect myself," said the stowaway, with a professional whine in his voice.

"What shall I do with him, captain?" asked Williams; but the skipper had vanished. Then he saw that Mrs. Warrington was wringing her hands over her daughter, who lay back in her chair, pale and evidently fainting. Captain Goodwin appeared from the cabin entrance, a tumbler half full of whisky in his right hand, an expression of great concern on his round, red face. At the same moment Florence opened her eyes.

"It's all right, dear," her mother said, and in a whisper added: "For Heaven's sake, be careful."

"Drink this, my dear young lady," begged the skipper.

A faint smile lighted the girl's white face.

"All of it, captain?" she questioned.

A laugh of relief came from all sides; then Mrs. Warrington said:

"Come, dear. You must lie down for a little while." Half supporting her daughter, she led her within, while the Old Man swung around, ready for business.

"That damned stowaway frightened the

child," he declared. "Tell Duncan to send the fellow forward."

Williams beckoned, and the cause of the disturbance was hustled along by two sturdy assistant engineers with no gentle hands. The stowaway was sullen, and evidently a trifle frightened.

"You needn't hold him," said the captain, nodding. "Now, my man, how did you get aboard my vessel?"

"I came out on the jute lighter, and slipped down into the coal bunkers yesterday afternoon," said the prisoner. His voice was low, not disagreeable, and he spoke like a person of some education. He stood erect and did not slouch, an almost soldierly bearing; but his pale-blue eyes were bloodshot, his manner half truculent, half cringing, and his skin tanned almost as brown as the lascars'. His hands twitched.

"Are you a sailor?"

"No."

"Be more respectful. You are talking to the captain."

"I beg your pardon," said the man. "I don't intend to be disrespectful."

"All right. What's your name and business?" demanded the captain.

"Call me James Lynch. I have no business."

"Why did you pick this vessel?"

"I wanted to get away from Citta-gong, and I knew you were bound for New York. I'd like to get to America."

"You're not an American. You're an Englishman."

"Yes, sir."

The captain studied his face, and did not care much for it.

"Well," he said, "I won't take you to America. You go ashore at the first port. I can't throw you overboard, and I can't berth you with the lascars, not that you don't deserve it, but they wouldn't have you. You can report to Duncan. He can use you in the engine room and make you earn your passage. Send him aft, Mr. Williams."

As the captain turned his back, Williams stepped close to the stowaway.

"I don't want anybody killed on this ship," he warned. "You humiliated the serang before his men and made an enemy of every lascar on board. You keep

your eyes open for a knife thrust in the dark."

"I can take care of myself," retorted the stowaway sullenly.

"Take this man to Mr. Duncan, and tell him the captain says to put him to work," commanded the first officer. When the fellow had departed, Williams dropped into his deck chair. He was resentful of the incident which had driven away the ladies, and rather curious as to the reason for the collapse of Miss Warrington, who did not look like a girl who would faint at the sight of a slight scuffle.

Presently the captain returned, and seated himself beside the first.

"That fellow interests me," said the Old Man. "He looked to me like a gentleman gone wrong. Did you notice the way he stood? A soldier, if I ever saw one, and by his speech an officer. Talked like a public-school man. This climate plays hell with the best of us; and an Englishman who comes out to India, if he happens to be a bit of a wrong'un at the start, degenerates in no time. I hate to chuck an Englishman into that hell hole of an engine room, but he had no business hiding himself on my ship."

"You didn't tell me how it happens that you accepted passengers," remarked Williams. "You always claim to hate to have them on board, yet you bring out two ladies without warning, and turn the ship upside down for them."

"I'll tell you, John. I was sorry for them. I was introduced to the mother at the English club, got chummy, and she confessed to me that they were almost at the end of their resources and were eager to get to New York, but didn't have money to pay their passages."

"They were in a hole of a hotel, and in a few weeks they would be penniless, in one of the worst towns in the East. So I offered to take them on the *Cannonmore* direct to New York for twenty pounds each. I made it as low as I could, but I think they had to pawn the last of their jewels to raise that much. Of course, I sign them on as members of the crew, to avoid butting up against the regulations."

"Did you happen to hear their story? It's curious that two American ladies

should be stranded in a place like that. They are ladies, obviously."

"Of course. No, I didn't make inquiries because I thought it was none of my business. I'm glad to give a helping hand to a fellow creature."

"Especially when she is as attractive as Mrs. Warrington, or her daughter."

"Well, maybe that had something to do with it," admitted the captain. "I did not see the daughter until she came on board. Did it seem sort of curious to you that the girl fainted when that blighter was dragged out of the coal bunkers?"

"Why, really, I——"

"I think she recognized him. Keep your eyes open, lad. We've got three people on board we don't know anything about."

About the middle of the afternoon the sun hid itself, and masses of clouds began to roll up from the south. The glass gave evidence that something was brewing, although its fall was gradual, which indicated an ordinary gale, not one of the infrequent, but horrible typhoons of those waters.

CHAPTER III.

AN ILL WIND.

THE *Cannonmore* was a stanch steel steamer, about fifteen years old at the time, under three hundred feet long, with a beam of forty feet, and driven by triple-expansion engines and a single screw. Although her hatches were bulging, she was high in the water because of the lightness of her load, a disadvantage in bad weather. Her deck house was about sixty feet long, and contained a tiny saloon, which was nearly filled by the dining table, big enough for eight persons. Off the saloon were several small cabins, usually occupied by the officers, and quarters opening on the deck, for the engineers and quartermasters, while the captain's room, on the deck above, opened directly into the chart house. The cook's galley was directly aft of the saloon, and a few feet farther aft, on the main deck, was the engine-room entrance. The single funnel was short and squat. When there was a following wind, the odor of food in the

squalid galley was wafted forward through the saloon, mingled with the smell of hot oil, which is sufficiently sickening in itself.

The cook of the *Cannonmore* was a Chinaman who was more cleanly in his habits than the average galley commander on such vessels, but he was overworked, and his kitchen was far from being well kept.

The ship's officers, accustomed to such things, whose stomachs were impervious to motion and smell, rather fancied their snug little saloon, but the present private opinion of the ladies was that the place was too dreadful for words.

A gentle breeze from the south shifted suddenly to a strong wind from the east, and the ship's odors became unpleasantly evident. Meanwhile, with the wind, the sea began to rise. Its brilliant blue had changed to a depressing lead color, with patches of snowy foam where the rising waves were breaking; and the two women retired upon the hard, narrow bunks, with miserable forebodings.

Now the *Cannonmore* began to creak and groan, giving, through its sturdy structure, to the movement of the sea, while its gentle roll became more pronounced, and a disturbing seesaw from stern to bow proceeded to complicate matters.

In the course of an hour, the wind had risen to forty or fifty miles, and the sea—as Florence could observe by lifting herself on her elbow and peering through the cabin window—so flat that morning, was now a succession of gray hills and valleys, and she could hear the masses of water strike the side of the vessel with a disheartening plump. As the wind was on the stern quarter, the pitching became more and more violent, and this, combined with the roll, gave a most disconcerting hitch-and-kick effect, much like riding on a camel.

Suddenly, there came a most terrific metallic rattling, which convinced her that something frightful had happened to the machinery; but in a moment it ceased, only to resume, a few moments later, with a greatly increased crash and clatter. It was nothing except the racket made by the ship's propeller when it emerged from

the water at the moment that the prow of the *Cannonmore* was descending into a deep liquid valley. For a while the girl shivered in alarm lest the ship was about to break up, but presently she dropped upon her hard pillow with a groan, and hoped that that was going to happen, for she was terribly seasick. In the next cabin, she heard her mother groaning, but even the knowledge that she was not alone in her misery did not help her.

Late in the day, the Chinese boy thrust a grinning face into the room to suggest something to eat, but Florence waved him away with such an expression of distaste that he did not return. And soon after, sick as she was, she was compelled to grasp with both hands the little rail screwed against the wall of her berth, for the *Cannonmore* was rolling so deep that the girl was in danger of being thrown from her berth. It seemed as though the opposite wall became the floor, while she was lying in a berth suspended from the ceiling; then the floor would rear up and become the ceiling, while she would be lying against the wall, instead of upon her berth. Her struggle to remain in her berth saved her from the worst extremity of seasickness, but when she heard a crash and a thump and cries from the next room, which indicated that Mrs. Warrington had been rolled out upon the floor, she had no inclination whatever to go to her assistance. When one is seasick one thinks only of self.

She heard loud voices and unfeeling laughter from the saloon, and the clink of glasses and clatter of dishes, but the thought of what they contained only made her more wretched. Why had she ventured upon the Indian Ocean in this cockleshell? Much better to have starved to death in heartless Cittagong.

Meanwhile, outside, Captain Goodwin was guiding his vessel through a storm which was rapidly becoming a hurricane, and which in the end grew so violent that he determined to bring the ship about and head her into the teeth of the gale, keeping only enough headway on her to hold her in that position. Heaving to under such conditions was a difficult operation, and during it the vessel rolled her rails under, while a succession of

great waves tore over the decks, climbing even to her superstructure and splashing against the windows of the state-rooms.

During this maneuver, one of the boats was torn loose from its davits, hurled across the steel decks and smashed against the opposite rail with a crash of splintered wood. The ship quivered and shook beneath the pounding of the ponderous seas, her stout metal giving, but not shattering, under the force of the blows. The deck forward was buried continuously. A big metal container broke loose and rolled back and forth on the after deck, clanking and clashing as it struck against lee and starboard rails in turn; its noise ceased only when an especially large wave carried it over the side.

UP in the forecabin the lascars crouched in their noisome berths, or lay prostrate upon the steel flooring, praying wildly for salvation. They lacked the confidence in the white man's skill and the stoutness of his boat construction which strengthened the officers on the bridge and heartened the men in the engine room.

Perched upon an iron grating, just above the toiling lascars firemen, stood the second engineer, a gleaming revolver in his right hand, keeping them to their work. Every now and then they were drenched by a flood of warm water which found its way down the passage from the deck, and they were certain they were all about to be drowned; but the revolver was even more certain in its threat, and so they prayed and shoved.

The stowaway, hopelessly seasick, lay upon the floor of the engine room, a dirty rag, which he was supposed to use for wiping, still grasped in his hand. Duncan, calm, sober, confident, sat in a chair from which he could watch everything, while the engines functioned smoothly.

If the racing of the propeller sounded alarming high above in the saloon cabins, its racket in the engine room was deafening; but the chief engineer was undisturbed. So long as the shaft held and the screw did not jerk itself from its socket, he knew that all was well.

In time the maneuver was completed, the ship had her nose into the gale, the bell from the bridge signaled for reduced speed, and she rode much easier. But she still pitched in a sickening fashion, and was safe only if her engines continued to work properly, if the firemen shoveled coal, the shaft did not break, and the propeller remained at the end of the shaft.

It was frightfully hot on deck, and like hell in the depths, but men who are trained to it can stand almost anything. Duncan, stripped to the waist and perspiring, was comfortable; though the stowaway almost died that night, and one of the lascar firemen burst his heart, suddenly, and fell right down on the deck, dead.

All night the *Cannonmore* fought the storm, and by sunrise she had won the battle, for the wind fell somewhat. The vessel put back on her course, and moved along at her full speed of nine knots an hour, though still making bad weather of it.

Captain Goodwin turned the ship over to the chief officer, went to his cabin, and was sleeping like a child in five minutes. He slept some hours, and rolled out fresh and in the best of spirits. He had weathered a hundred storms as bad as that of the night before.

Florence Warrington, after the most miserable night of her life, fell asleep toward morning and slept for many hours, to awaken as weak as a kitten and still in a condition of deadly nausea. To the ship's officers all was fair again; but the sea was still running high enough to cause the freighter to pitch and roll savagely. The girl heard her mother groaning on the other side of the thin partition, and called to her:

"Are you very, very sick, mother?"

"I'm dying! How could you lie there and never come near me?"

"I think I'm going to die myself, but I suppose it's just being seasick."

Hearing their voices, the steward's boy opened Florence's door and silently extended toward her a bowl of soup, which caused the girl to shudder and wave him piteously away. He did not venture into the cabin of Mrs. Warrington.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRIG "SAO PAULO."

LATE in the afternoon John Williams, who was on the bridge, observed a black spot swimming in the glittering gold of the west, and clapped his glasses to his eyes for a better view of it.

"What do you make of it?" demanded the third officer. "I've been watching it for several minutes."

"Hard to see in this glare, but we'd better swing over that way, don't you think?"

"Rouse the skipper?"

"Wait until we can make it out."

The ship's nose turned westward, while Williams continued to gaze through his glasses.

"It's a sailing vessel," he informed his companion. "Seems to be completely dismantled. There is a mass of wreckage piled on deck and not a spar standing. She's pretty low in the water, too, and may be sinking. Signal full speed, and perhaps you had better call the Old Man."

However, it was not necessary to awaken Captain Goodwin. Deep in slumber as a competent sea captain may be, some tiny watchman is always alert in his brain to warn him of the unusual, and the change in the course of the vessel, followed by the bells to the engine room, were sufficient to cause him to roll out of his berth, landing on his feet and wide awake.

"What's afoot?" he demanded through the speaking tube to the bridge.

"Sighted a sailing ship, dismantled and looking as though she were going down. We're running down to her."

"That's right. I'll be out in a few minutes."

In another quarter of an hour they were within half a mile of the disabled vessel, and were able to have a good look at her as they ran between her and the blazing sun now low in the sky.

She was a brig—or she had been a brig—whose deck was piled high with wreckage—a jumble of spars and sails. An attempt had been made to cut away her mainmast to clear the ship, but it had fallen toward the bow and projected

beyond it, while the jagged end of the foremast had penetrated through one of the square sails and prevented getting the wreckage over the side. Evidently the foremast had gone first, leaving the vessel unmanageable, and the brig had then yawned and fallen into the trough of the sea. The falling of the mainmast had quickly followed, and under such conditions it was a miracle that she was still afloat. She seemed to be down by the head a little, evidently leaking forward, and might go at any time.

Both Williams and Third Officer Yates had learned their trade in sailing ships, and, therefore, regarded the mess on the brig with contempt; there was no excuse for such a spectacle; even if the storm had been severe enough to carry away the masts, the skipper should have managed to get his wreckage overboard. Most likely, the crash of the heavy mainmast, falling upon the deck, had strained the frame of the vessel and caused her seams to open.

A flag was waving over the stern—the Portuguese ensign, upside down—and, while the officers looked, a man climbed upon the poop and waved frantic arms. At that moment Captain Goodwin stepped upon the bridge.

"Signal to them to lower their boat and come aboard," he commanded.

"I can't make out a boat, captain," said the chief officer. "Either they were all smashed, or the crew has abandoned the ship. I see only one man."

The skipper looked thoughtful. A heavy sea was running, no longer perilous to the ship, but enough to make it impossible to take the *Cannonmore* very close to the wreck, and sure to make the launching and handling of a lifeboat a dangerous enterprise.

"I don't want to lose a boat or a boat's crew," he grumbled. "What a filthy mess. Don't tell me such a crew are seamen. Look, there are a couple more survivors. One of them wears a turban. Think we had better lay to until morning. How's the glass?"

"I'm afraid it is going to blow some more, captain, in which case it will be a tougher job to get a boat over there than at present."

"Damn it! It's too bad your eyesight was so good. Well, shall we try a lifeboat?"

"I think I can manage it," said Williams, with more confidence than he felt. Captain Goodwin walked to the side of the ship and looked down.

"You stand an elegant chance of being smashed against the side," he declared. "Still, if you want to go, I've got to let you, though you can bet they wouldn't take a chance for us if the situation was reversed. You'll have to ask for volunteers, and I doubt if you can persuade a lascar to step forward. Better get up a cask of oil and try to flatten out the sea long enough to get away from the ship."

Williams was already blowing his whistle for "all hands on deck," and the brown men were emerging reluctantly from their shelters.

"I need six oars," said the first officer. "Yates will go with me, one or two of the engineer's assistants, and perhaps we can get a couple of lascars."

"I hate to lose two officers but— Oh, well, you may make it," said the captain.

THE serang had come to the deck, an expression of alarm on his face. When he was informed of the service required, he shrugged, made a gesture of distaste, then went off to break the news to his crew. Duncan and two of the young Scots who served him in the engine room appeared on deck, followed by the lank, green-visaged stowaway, seasick, but by this time able to move about once more.

Krebbs, who was supposed to be asleep, had been awakened by the cessation of vibration when the engines were stopped, and now showed up, wiping the sleep from his eyes with his big fists. And then a pale wraith which was Florence Warrington staggered out from the saloon entrance, and regarded the group with lackluster eyes. The sight of her caused all the white men to square their shoulders; nothing heartens men, who are about to gamble with their lives, like a woman spectator.

"We're going to try to take those fel-

lows off, men," said Williams curtly. "I'm taking the boat, and I need six oars."

"I'm your man," declared Krebbs.

"You are not," contradicted the skipper from the bridge. "Do you suppose I'm going to let all my officers set forth in that sea?"

"One of ye can go, but not both," declared Duncan to his pair.

"I need four more," Williams stated.

"What luck, serang?"

"Men say, 'not sign to go in boat,'" replied the native boatswain.

One of the quartermasters stepped forward, and then two white men of the crew followed his example.

"One shy," commented Williams.

The stowaway, holding on to the rail, astonished them, then.

"I can pull an oar," he said, "if you want to take me."

"But, man, you're seasick. You are too weak."

"It's the heat and stench of that blasted engine room. I'll be all right in a boat, I'm sure."

"Good man!" exclaimed Florence shrilly.

"Aye, good man!" echoed Williams, clapping the fellow on the back. "If we come back, I'll see that you get a little better treatment. Now get the cover off that second lifeboat, and swing it out. Krebbs, the skipper says to break out a cask of oil and see what oil on troubled water will do. We're all right if we can get away from the ship's side."

The *Cannonmore* was rolling very heavily, so that the boat, when it was swung out, dropped to within three or four feet of the surface at one moment, then was lifted twenty-five feet in air. Furthermore, there was a rise and fall of fully ten or twelve feet of the sea, and it was necessary to synchronize the roll of the ship and movement of the waves, so that the boat would be released in the most favorable position. The second she touched the water and was free, it was necessary to give way with a vengeance, lest an unruly billow hurl the wooden craft against the steel side of the ship. There is no more dangerous task for a seaman than getting a lifeboat away from a vessel in a heavy sea, except, per-

haps, getting safely back on board; but Williams was an exceptionally skillful seaman, and the third officer, also, knew his business.

While Florence Warrington, gripping the rail with both hands, stared down with terrified eyes, Williams signaled the release of the boat at exactly the right instant. The six oars dipped into the water, and the craft was borne away by a receding wave, being carried, in a second, thirty feet from the vessel. Suddenly, Miss Warrington shrieked, for another huge wave, approaching the ship, lifted the boat on its crest and bore it back stern first.

It looked as though it would be cracked like an eggshell. The crew was rowing desperately; Williams, boat hook in hand, legs spread wide apart, stood in the stern. Just enough headway was made so that the boat moved off the crest of the sea. Williams jammed his heavy pole against the vessel, to contribute a trifle to breaking the force of the blow, and was knocked into the bottom of the boat by the process; then the stern tapped smartly against the steamer's side, but the stout boat did not crumple; and the wave, receding, carried it swiftly away. The six oars dipped deep, all six men pulling for life, so that they might reach a safe distance before the next billow assailed them.

A STEADY stream of oil had contributed a bit to the success of the departure; and, as Florence watched the boat move off, she forgot her illness, and marveled at the things men dare to do on the ocean. A few rods farther, and the boat was no longer protected in part by the steamer from the full fury of the waves. The girl observed that the billows were pyramid shaped. Sometimes the boat was lifted to the apex, both stem and stern being entirely out of the water, showing keel, then it vanished into a chasm between the waves, and climbed up a smooth, green slope of water like a fly creeping up a wall, always moving slowly toward the black hulk, along whose rail three human figures were lined, waving encouragement to their would-be rescuers.

Williams had no intention of boarding

the wreck, but he crept up into its lee, and, at a distance of thirty or forty feet, shouted to the survivors to jump. One of them immediately climbed on the rail, dived fearlessly into the water, and came to the surface a dozen feet from the boat. A few strokes brought him within reach of the boat hook, which he grasped with both hands; he was hauled safely aboard in a jiffy. The second man, a small person, sank to the deck and covered his face with both hands.

"Jump, damn you, jump!" cried Williams, cupping his hands to his lips. "Think we can stay here all day?"

They were having great difficulty in keeping the boat within swimming distance of the wreck, for the waves were pulling at it, and while he spoke, it was drawn a hundred feet away. With much travail they worked back to their original position; and then the third individual, the big man with the turban, stooped, picked the little one up in his arms, kissed the pleading face, and then threw the creature overboard.

"It's a woman!" cried Williams. "Probably she can't swim."

But the big man had followed her, and now both faces appeared close together, not more than twenty feet from the boat.

"Swim, swim!" commanded the chief officer. "Damn it, they don't know anything! Take command of the boat, Yates." Kicking off his shoes, he dived over the side, and swam rapidly to the aid of the pair. The big man was supporting the woman, and making no effort to approach the boat; but Williams reached them, shouldered the man aside, caught the woman under the arms, flung himself on his back and kicked out lustily, whereupon the man, whose turban was still in place, swam after him. The third officer dropped his oar and seized the boat hook, and, as the sea was carrying the trio astern, he ordered the crew to backwater rapidly. A moment later he twisted the iron hook in the collar of John Williams and, with the sailors, drew him with great difficulty over the side, still clinging to the woman. The third survivor was being carried rapidly astern, and shrieking for help; but they

now bent to their oars and ran alongside him, while the boat hook again did its duty.

CHAPTER V.

QUEER CUSTOMERS.

THE journey back was not a whit less dangerous than the progress to the wreck. Once, despite the skill of the steersman, the bow yawed a trifle, and a wave came on board, half filling the boat with water, and drawing yells from the three rescued who lay in the bottom.

"Bail, confound you, bail!" shouted Williams, leaning forward to thrust a bailing can in the hand of the man with the turban. In a moment all three were bailing for dear life, and the accident was not repeated. Approaching the steamer required the greatest craft and delicacy; a dozen times they seemed in danger of destruction, but seamanship prevailed, and in the end the crew and the rescued were standing upon the deck of the *Cannonmore*, and the lifeboat, uninjured, was being made fast aboard.

"Quite neat, I call it," was the only comment of the skipper. Nevertheless, John Williams flushed with pleasure, for Goodwin was a superb seaman, and would have been quick to criticize the slightest error. For the first time Williams had a chance to see what the survivors looked like; he had been too much occupied until now to give them a glance.

That the man with the turban was an East Indian of high caste was evident from his bearing, his light-brown complexion, and his silk garments. The small person was a girl, apparently not more than sixteen years of age, a beautiful little thing whose costume was the pajamas customarily worn in the Orient. Florence was already leading her within.

The third-person was obviously a Portuguese sailor, with a black beard, low brow, glittering black eyes, and gold earrings—probably an officer, perhaps the captain of the wrecked brig.

William's eyes returned to the Hindu, the most distinguished of the trio, who was about six feet tall, broad-shouldered, thin, like nearly all natives of India, and with a keen, high-bred, intelligent face—a personality, if not a personage.

Catching the eye of the first officer, this man stepped forward, and surprised Williams by speaking English.

"Sir," he said, "I wish to thank you for your courage in plunging into the water, which undoubtedly was the cause of my salvation and that of the lady. I also congratulate you upon your superb management of your boat. Had you been in command of the brig, instead of this creature, I do not think we would have had need of a rescue. I am Sir Ramdar Mogne. Will you kindly introduce me to your commander."

He extended his hand, which Williams grasped cordially.

"With pleasure, sir. Is this the captain of the brig then?"

"This dog is the captain of the brig. He speaks no English."

Captain Goodwin, who had guessed the rank of the Portuguese and had been endeavoring vainly to communicate with him, now bore down upon the chief officer and the East Indian.

"Can't get a word out of that fellow," he declared. "Williams, get the ship back on her course, and then change your clothes. You may have something this brown gentleman can get into; and the second officer will fix up the Portuguese. I've got to get some information for the log about this disaster."

"Captain, sir," said the big man, with a low bow, "I can, perhaps, give you the information you desire."

The skipper stared.

"I'll be switched!" he exclaimed. "You speak better English than any native I ever set my eyes on."

"I am a graduate of Oxford, sir."

"You don't say? Suppose you come into my cabin and tell me what happened. Hanged if I know how I am going to accommodate you. I've got no passenger quarters, and I've two ladies aboard already."

"We are grateful for any sort of quarters, after a horrible experience."

"Who's the woman?" demanded the skipper gruffly.

With some hesitation the other said:

"My wife, sir."

"Then you can share one cabin. Enter this way, sir."

Seated in the skipper's snug quarters, Goodwin produced a bottle of whisky and two glasses, one of which the native accepted, and drained at a gulp.

"Want to change your clothes before we talk?"

"Thank you, sir, but it is so warm, I am dry already. The ocean and the air are about equally humid."

"Very good. What was the name of that brig?"

"The *Sao Paolo*—Colombo to Singapore."

"You are a long way off your course." "We were driven for several days before furious gales."

"What became of your crew?"

"The swine deserted the ship in the only boat which was not broken, leaving us to our fate."

"What I should expect from them," commented the skipper, who had the Briton's contempt for Continental seamen.

"How did it happen that the captain stuck to his ship?"

"He was driven from the boat by the mate, who had stolen his revolver. After they departed, we were helpless, of course, unable to hold the ship on her course; the sails were blown away, the masts fell, she was leaking, and we could not man the pumps. I expected her to go under long since."

"She may drift around for hours yet, but she's settling steadily. If I thought she would float, it would be my duty to blow her up as a dangerous derelict. I would do it anyway, except that it's too rough to board her. Why did the crew abandon the ship? They must have known that a lifeboat could not survive in such a sea as was running."

"They caught the captain provisioning the boat. It was his intention to use her for our escape; there was not room for all. He proposed to take eight men and abandon the rest."

"But, if your masts were standing, why risk the sea?"

"The foremast had gone by the board, sir, and she was unmanageable, and the water was gaining in the hold. Accordingly, the crew mustered, there was a fight, the mate sided against us, one or

two men were knifed, and the rest of them piled into the boat and got away."

"It's a wonder she was not swamped immediately."

"It's too bad!" said the East Indian savagely. "But she was afloat as long as we could see."

"When did this happen?"

"This morning."

"I see. What's this captain's name, and what sort of person is he?"

"He is a hog, a drunken beast, and a coward. His name, it is Viatoro Sousa."

"What were you laden with?"

"A mixed cargo, spices, tea, sandalwood, and silk, consigned to a Chinese firm at Singapore. May I ask where you are bound, sir?"

"New York—cargo of jute."

"It would be a great service if you could land us at Singapore."

"Doubtless," replied the captain dryly; "but it is very far out of our course. Impossible, my friend."

"And your next port, sir?"

"Colombo."

A quiver of fright crossed the countenance of the Hindu.

"I pray you, sir, there are reasons. I implore you not to go to Colombo."

"I propose to land you there."

The man jumped to his feet and wrung his hands.

"No, sir. You must not!"

"And why not, pray?" demanded the skipper harshly, suspicion flashing in his eye. "You have just come from there."

The native sat down again and composed himself.

"Sir, I will make a confession. The lady with me, she is a princess; I am a merchant of Colombo. We have eloped. It is death to me to return to Colombo."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAGIC OF A TITLE.

IN the world there is no more sentimental person than an Englishman, despite his armor of insouciance, nor among Englishmen are there any so romantic as the bluff, gruff individuals who follow the seas; while the spell of titles is upon them all. Here was romance, and one of the pair was a princess. They had escaped

on the Portuguese brig from Colombo, probably narrowly evading the assassins of the native ruler whose daughter had eloped with a person not of royal blood, and now Fate had arranged that the brig should be wrecked and the pair rescued by a steamer headed for Colombo, where death waited the man and an almost equally unpleasant fate the woman. Captain Goodwin ruminated. He had coaled at Calcutta before crossing the bay to Cittagong, and he could probably continue around to Bombay or even at Aden before his bunkers would be empty. There was no cargo awaiting him at the Ceylonese port, and a wireless to his agent that he would omit the port would allay all anxiety.

But while he sat in thought, the dark Romeo had pulled up the front of his jacket and revealed around his waist a wide belt of yellow silk. Turning his back, he fumbled for a second, then suddenly swung about and laid upon the table before the astonished eyes of the skipper a red stone as big as a coffee bean, which flashed like fire, and beside it two white, unset diamonds, each at least three carats.

"These I shall present to you if you will not touch at Colombo," he said. "And all my life I shall most surely pray for you."

"Humph!" grunted the skipper. "I suppose there are more where those come from."

"If you require it."

The captain picked up the three gems and admired them, then handed them back to their owner.

"I don't take bribes," he said curtly.

"Then you refuse," groaned the eloper.

"It's like this, young man. We went to a lot of trouble to save your life and that of her royal highness, and I hate to hand you over to murderers after pulling you out of the ocean. It isn't absolutely necessary for me to put in at Colombo, and under the circumstances I'll continue on to Bombay."

"But in Bombay I am still within reach of the rajah's agents."

"Oh, she's a rajah's daughter? Well, I don't want to get in trouble with the authorities, and I don't want any more

dangerous information. Will you be safe at Aden?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Perhaps we shall not touch at a port before Aden. It depends on the weather conditions."

The native threw himself at the captain's feet and embraced his knees.

"God will reward you, captain," he promised. "And I implore you accept these poor jewels."

"You'll need all your jewels to support a princess," smiled Captain Goodwin. "What worries me is how the deuce I am going to accommodate you all. Better see how the princess is getting along."

He rolled the word "princess" with unction, for the skipper had his weakness, though jewels would not tempt him, and it pleased him to be host to royalty, even light-brown royalty.

"I'll have to ask the Warringtons to berth together," he mused. "Set up another berth in each cabin and let these natives have one of them. Clean out the storeroom and fix up a bed for the Portuguese; can't send him forward, damn him! It's a bally passenger liner the *Cannonmore* has become. But it will be something to tell in the Mariner's Club in London, how I rescued a royal princess and helped her escape her father's minions. Hanged if it ain't just exactly like a novel."

As everybody knows, without its doing anybody any good, seasickness is a malady which is to a certain extent imaginary—real enough to the sufferer, of course—but it can be banished if something more important comes along. It is a matter of record that passengers on a liner which is sinking come rushing from their cabins, and that the sick reach the deck as quickly as the well, and usually throw off their ailment in the excitement of taking to the boats. Florence Warrington had crawled on deck as sick as any young woman could be; but the thrilling happenings of the past hour had driven from her mind her own woe, and she had clung earnestly to the ship's rail, while she gazed with fascinated eyes on the marvelous achievement of the launching of the lifeboat and its perilous progress toward the disabled and sinking brig.

THERE was a heavy burden upon the soul of Florence Warrington; her thoughts had been bitter ones; and so intent had she been upon her own affairs that the people she had met upon the steamer were, to her, more or less shadowy. John Williams had impressed her as a handsome, well-set-up young Englishman, pleasant, courteous and attractive, with whom she had exchanged trivial ideas, but regarding whom she had not wondered much.

To her inexperienced eyes, the aspect of the ocean was utterly horrible; its waves were not hills of water, but vast gray-green beasts to whose maws no humans should intrust themselves. The ship was being tossed about from one peak to another, like a pebble by giants, a very frail raft, in imminent danger of destruction, to which all must cling until the final moment; yet beside the small, white lifeboat it was a leviathan—and into that cockleshell she had seen climb the mild, pleasant young man of whom she had taken small notice.

She had marveled at his coolness, and admired his sharp words of command; he grew before her eyes into a mighty person, in whose fate she was supremely absorbed. She was astonished to see the miserable stowaway also in the boat; to her it seemed unbelievable that such individuals could go forth to certain death, for the sake of the almost indistinguishable forms she saw moving at the rail of the black mass which was the wreck.

When it had looked as though the lifeboat was being hurled back against the wall of the ship's side to inevitable destruction, she had screamed shrilly, unheeded in the excitement; and then she waited, her heart missing its strokes, when the lifeboat disappeared in the valleys between the sea mountains. During this period of suspense, she had no thought of self, and her indignant stomach decided it was useless to complain further. She saw the people on the brig throw themselves one by one into the sea. She had screamed again when, as the boat rode the peak of a wave, John Williams had leaped overboard.

In the whole drama of the ocean there is no scene more dramatic than the de-

parture of a boat from a ship, on an errand of rescue; and Florence Warrington had been privileged to witness a particularly audacious expedition. If her heart had been weak, it might not have endured the suspense, but it was a strong, warm heart, and it survived. Yet, when the chief officer was safe on deck with his crew, she said not a word to him, but pounced upon the frail, trembling Hindu woman, placed a protecting arm around her, and half carried her from the deck to the saloon entrance. There she cast a backward glance and met the gaze, not of Williams, but of the stowaway, who was looking at her, half defiantly, half appealingly; and to him she, perforce, nodded approval.

Although the ship was pitching and tossing, Florence, still weak from lack of food and too much excitement, was no longer conscious of the motion. She helped the girl into her cabin, and hastened to find garments which the native woman accepted gratefully; and then Florence lifted her in her strong arms and laid her in the berth.

"You poor dear," the American girl said. "Did you have a very dreadful time?"

"Yes," sobbed the other, with a quaint, unwritable accent, more foreign in intonation than pronunciation. "I think we die. I have been in the terrible sea."

"You are safe now. Just close your eyes and try to forget it."

"I can never forget," said the native. "But you are very good. I love you."

"Try to rest and do not cry any more," Florence advised, then left the cabin, and entered her mother's room. Mrs. Warrington still lay in her berth, for the excitement had meant nothing to her. She groaned and sighed and suffered, and began to reproach her daughter for heartlessness in leaving her so long alone.

"But I was as sick as you. Oh, mother, I have seen the most thrilling sight, a rescue at sea. I think Mr. Williams is the bravest man in the whole world."

"I don't care," replied her mother. "How can you stand there and talk about such things when I am dying?"

"You'll get over it. I'm going to find something to eat."

"Go away," groaned Mrs. Warrington. "How can you even speak of such a thing?"

Florence smiled.

"I know how you feel, but you'll get over it, just as I did."

"Go away," the seasick woman implored; so Florence ventured into the tiny cabin, where she moved cautiously to a seat at the table, and rang the bell for the steward. *Mal de mer* troubled her no more.

A moment later the Portuguese captain came in from the deck, his black eyes snapping in admiration; for Florence, though pale, was still beautiful. He addressed her in Portuguese, to which she could return no answer, then in halting French, which she understood.

"Are you the captain's wife?" he demanded.

"No. I am a passenger."

"Ah, but you are beautiful!"

"Thank you. Did you own that ship?"

"Si, senhora. I have lost all." He made a gesture of despair which awakened her sympathy; but he was not so downcast that he was not regarding her too boldly.

"Poor man; but, at least, your life is safe. It was a wonderful thing for that lifeboat crew to go to your rescue."

"Bah!" he retorted. "I do the same. That India senhora, she is in the room with you?"

"Yes."

"She wear something around her neck. No?"

Florence rose indignantly.

"How dare you ask such questions?"

"Pardon, senhora. I think she have something that do not belong to her."

"Whatever it is, I am sure it does not belong to you." The girl took refuge in her mother's cabin, determined to speak to Captain Goodwin at the first opportunity, regarding the curious Portuguese.

The latter went out on deck, encountered Williams, and was voluble in his gratitude; though the officer could not understand a word he said. Then, as no one paid any attention to him, the Portuguese wandered aft, where he encountered the stowaway who had been excused from duty in the engine room at

present and was lounging against a hatchway. Captain Sousa recognized him as one of the crew, and tried him in Portuguese, then in French. The pariah of the ship understood French, and answered. A palaver followed, which lasted for an hour.

In the meantime, the ship was moving steadily back upon the course, from which she had veered to aid the disabled brig; and Krebbs paced the bridge, while Captain Goodwin gave orders to the stewards to berth the three rescued individuals.

CHAPTER VII.

UNWELCOME GUESTS.

THE wind had freshened, and the sea, already rough, was lifting again; but the glass gave no indication of another severe gale—in fact, it was rising, and by morning fair weather could be counted upon.

Perhaps two hours had passed since the rescue, and the ship had steamed fifteen or sixteen knots, when a hail from the crow's nest attracted the attention of the second officer. The lookout was pointing westward. The second clapped the glass to his eyes and observed a black speck bobbing on the water.

"Looks like a ship's boat," he told the man at the wheel, then, spying Williams on deck below, shouted:

"I say, John, there's an open boat about six miles off. Bet it's the crew of the brig, the hounds."

"Better notify the skipper, and run down to her."

The course was changed again, and Captain Goodwin immediately came on deck.

"If it's that boatload from the *Sao Paolo*," he growled, "I've a darn good mind to pass them by. Seamen who abandoned their ship, with the passengers and the captain still on board, deserve no help."

"That captain is a bad lot, sir," the chief officer said. "The Hindu told me he was getting ready to abandon them; they found him provisioning the boat."

"Well, we can't leave human beings adrift, no matter how bad they are. I suppose we'll have to pick them up, but

where I am going to put them all is a mystery to me."

In ten minutes the boat, with a number of persons in it who were rowing earnestly toward the ship, was clearly visible.

The captain climbed to the bridge, followed by the chief officer, and they watched the approach of the lifeboat. There were ten oars dipping in the water, and there seemed to be three or four other men grouped at the stern. If they were the crew of the *Sao Paolo*, it was a miracle that they were still afloat, since they had launched their boat many hours before the *Cannonmore* hove in sight; the sea was running higher then than when Williams made his daring trip to the wreck. Any doubt as to the identity of the boat was solved by the appearance of the Portuguese captain on the bridge, who foamed with anger and, unable to speak English, indicated by pantomime his wish that they abandon the seamen to their fate.

"The blighter is trying to tell us not to pick them up," said Krebbs.

The skipper's red face grew purple; he suddenly grasped the Portuguese by the shoulder, twirled him round, pushed him to the head of the ladder, drew back his right foot and, with a hearty kick, sent the man, screaming and clawing at the rail, headfirst down the ladder to the deck below.

"Get ready to draw them up if they contrive to get their boat alongside," he said crisply. "Stand by with half a dozen life buoys if they smash up and go into the water. We ought to be able to save some of them."

The *Cannonmore* swung to the windward of the oncoming boat, so that it could approach, sheltered from the worst efforts of the waves by the ship's high side, then stopped her engines, and lay rolling heavily, awaiting what might happen. In this case there was no risk to any on board; it was entirely up to the seamanship of the boatmen whether their lives would be saved or lost with salvation in sight. The approach of the boat made the latter seem more likely, for there was none of the craft of Williams' return, in their case. They had

great trouble getting into the lee of the steamer, and even in those comparatively quiet waters the boat would swing off into the trough of the sea and ship water in great quantities. The contents of the second cask of oil was dripping over the ship's side; a dozen men with life buoys and lines stood ready to assist, while the rope ladder hung invitingly down, amidships.

NOW they could hear the commander of the boat shrieking curses, and saw him strike a rower at the bow who missed a stroke; then a wave lifted the craft and rushed with her to the ship. The order to back water came too late; with a bump the boat struck the steel side of the *Cannonmore* and flattened like an egg dropped on the floor, spilling into the ocean half a dozen men, and in a few seconds sinking beneath the feet of the remainder of those on board.

The round life buoys were striking the water; as soon as a man grasped one and thrust his shoulders through, he was yanked upward by half a dozen seamen, bumping and smashing against the steel wall until, bruised and bleeding, he was hauled over the rail. Two men were struggling at the foot of the rope ladder; one was halfway up when the second grasped him desperately by the leg. He shook free, then as the man snatched desperately again, he paused, and kicked him viciously in the face. The sailor sank and did not reappear.

"Mark that fellow," said Captain Goodwin to the chief officer. "I'll pay the swine for that."

It was all over in two or three minutes; on the steamer's deck stood eight of the twelve or thirteen who had composed the boat's crew, as unpleasant an aggregation of seafaring persons as it was possible to imagine.

One of them was a six-foot African negro, a large white scar on the right side of his black face, naked to the waist, with a tremendous torso, and two enormous arms. There were two Chinamen, as different from the meek coolies who do our laundry in America as it is possible to imagine—the type which swarmed from Chinese junks, with knives in their

teeth, upon unwary merchant ships, half a century ago; and a pair of thin, wiry, savage-looking Malays. Two small, swarthy Europeans—Portuguese, no doubt—with earrings and pockmarked faces, comprised the rest of the outfit, with the exception of the man who had kicked another off the rope ladder.

This individual was an American, impossible as it seems, a long, lean, wide-shouldered brute with a hatchet face, a pair of small blue eyes, a long nose which had been broken and was now shaped like a boomerang, a wide, cruel mouth with thin lips. His wheedling smile, as he approached the captain, revealed small, sharp, yellow teeth, and fully half an inch each of upper and lower gum.

"I'm much obliged, sir," he said, "for saving me and my boat's crew. We been twelve hours in that boat, and we was certainly glad to see you bearin' down. A welcome sight, say I. And it's good to be on the deck of a British ship."

Captain Goodwin gazed at him with rising choler.

"Who in hell are you?" he demanded.

"I'm Tim Crane, sir, mate of the Portuguese brig *Sao Paolo* which foundered in the gale early this mornin'."

"What was a Yankee doing on a ship like that?"

"I was out of luck, sir, down and out. I got a master's ticket."

"You rat, you! I saw you kick that man in the face on the rope ladder. Now you get out of my sight before I knock you overboard where you belong!"

The sailor's blue eyes suddenly flashed a poisonous light, then he rubbed his hands as though he were washing them and said meekly:

"He had hold of my leg, sir, and was tryin' to pull me down. I was just tryin' to shake loose."

"You are a liar! Mr. Williams, make some arrangements to feed and quarter this gang of cutthroats until I can find a way to get rid of them."

The captain swung about and entered the cabin, no longer trusting himself to speak, while Williams drove the seamen from the saloon deck to the main deck.

"That's no way to treat poor ship-

wrecked seamen," whined the mate of the *Sao Paolo*.

"Shut up, you!" commanded Williams savagely. "Best keep out of sight on this hooker, because your captain is aboard and has a bone to pick with you."

"The hell you say!" exclaimed Crane. "You took him off the wreck? Did you get the passengers?"

"Yes, and we heard how you abandoned the ship."

"This is news."

"Stand in line," commanded the chief officer. "You, too, Mr. Mate. Mr. Yates, will you frisk this mob and take away any weapons they may have on their persons?"

The third officer went along the line, relieved the negro and two Malays of long knives which they carried inside their pants, took a dangerous clasp knife from one of the Portuguese, and drew from the trousers pocket of Mr. Crane a serviceable-looking revolver. Then, and only then, did Captain Sousa put in an appearance. A murmur of anger rose from the line at the sight of the skipper they had supposed at the bottom of the sea, while he stood at a safe distance and cursed them fluently, until Williams grasped him by the collar and shook him.

"Avast that. You're no better than your men, and you're all a lot of scuts," he informed him.

"What are we going to do with them?" asked the third, coming up with his arms full of weapons.

"The lascars have the forecabin, and we certainly can't put them amidships. Better put them to work clearing out that after deck house."

"There are no berths in it, sir."

"Give them some blankets, and let them sleep on deck. This mate bunks with them."

"Say, I demand the courtesies due an officer."

"You're lucky if Captain Goodwin doesn't decide to hang you for a dirty murderer," growled John Williams.

"Step lively, now," commanded the third officer. "The quicker you clear out that storeroom, the quicker you can lay down. Move. Move. Give them their orders, Mr. Mate."

CHAPTER VIII.

BLACK EYES AND BLUE.

WITH the cutthroats from the *Sao Paolo* hard at work, Williams had some leisure and decided to turn in for an hour or so, but as he entered the cabin he encountered Florence Warrington, who barred his passage.

"Mr. Williams," she said, "I witnessed the entire incident of your rescue of those people from that sinking vessel, and I have been waiting for a chance to tell you what a heroic thing it was, and how I admire you."

Her black eyes were shining, and her lower lip was trembling in her enthusiasm, while both her hands were outstretched. Blushing vividly, he placed his hands in hers, and thought that he had never seen anybody even one half so beautiful.

"It wasn't much," he said.

"It was a sublime act of self-sacrifice and heroism."

"Nonsense. I just did what had to be done."

"You didn't have to do it. There was a storm, and I am sure many officers would not have thought it necessary."

He laughed.

"You are not familiar with the sea, Miss Warrington. Since the earliest times it has been the custom to send aid to a shipwrecked vessel, and it would take more courage to refuse to make the attempt, in view of our traditions, than to make it. Any other British or American steamer, which came upon a craft like the *Sao Paolo*, would have sent a boat if the sea had been twice as rough, even if those who went knew that they were sure to lose their lives. It's like soldiers who are told to charge the enemy. They do not want to charge and get killed, but they are more afraid not to obey the order than to obey it."

"I won't permit you to belittle your wonderful deed," she said, smiling, "and my opinion of your heroism is unchanged. Do you know that the girl you rescued is perfectly beautiful?"

"An East Indian, isn't she?" he asked indifferently.

"Yes. Of the highest caste."

"They are not my idea of womanly beauty. Is she all right?"

"Sleeping like a baby. I put her in my berth."

"That was generous of you. Do you know you look marvelous? Are you all over your seasickness?"

"It was scared out of me," she replied, laughing. "Who were those people you just took on board?"

"The worst-looking crew I have seen for a long time. It's too bad we sighted them, for their loss would have been a blessing."

"How can you say such a thing? They are human beings."

He made a whimsical gesture.

"I'm not so sure. They are the crew who abandoned your young charge on the *Sao Paolo*."

"Oh, the brutes! Nevertheless, you were right in saving them."

"If they had drowned, they would have cheated the hangman. Won't you come out on deck for a while?"

"Not now. I am nursing mother, who is still very sick. Would you believe she was too ill to get up and witness your rescue work?"

"So long as you saw it and were pleased, I am content."

"I'll never forget it," she said earnestly.

"Williams!" shouted Captain Goodwin, from his cabin doorway. "Ask Miss Warrington to excuse you, and come in here for a minute."

He bowed, the girl smiled, and he obeyed the order.

"Sit down, John," said the skipper, when Williams had entered and the door was closed.

"Now, here's a pretty kettle of fish. I don't like the look of that gang we just took on board. They're no different from pirates."

"We'll watch them, and land them in a few days at Colombo."

The captain looked embarrassed.

"Damn it! we can't," he said, with some hesitation. "This big Hindu we rescued can't go to Colombo."

"Why should we bother about him?"

"Well, the truth is, it's a romance. He's eloped with a rajah's daughter, and if

he sets foot in an Indian or Ceylonese port, he'll be murdered out of hand. The girl is a princess. You rescued a princess, бедad. What do you think of that?"

"I think we ought to get rid of the *Sao Paolo* crew as quickly as possible."

"Of course, so do I; but I promised not to touch at Colombo. Furthermore, the fellow has a belt around his waist which I am convinced contains a fortune in jewels. He offered me a ruby and a couple of diamonds which must be worth a thousand pounds. Naturally, I didn't take them."

"Wheew!" whistled Williams. "S'pose he stole them?"

"He's probably a rich Indian nobleman, and turned his fortune into gems when he arranged the elopement. The question is, does the crew of that brig suspect?"

"Hardly, or they would have cut his throat before they left the ship. They'd do it for a one-pound note."

"Probably. But suppose they get wind of it on board the *Cannonmore*? We have very few in our crew upon whom we can depend. Three navigating officers, four engineers, six seamen, the radio man, half an Asiatic——"

"That's fifteen, and you forget the stowaway. He pulled a stout oar in an emergency. There are only eight of the possible enemy."

"Lynch is a wrong un. I don't like his face. First opportunity I'm going to ask Mrs. Warrington what she knows about him. I'm sure he's no stranger to her."

"Think the big Indian can be depended upon? And the Portuguese captain would have to stand with us. He's hated by his men. That makes seventeen, all told. And we have arms."

"I suppose he would fight—the Indian, I mean; but Sousa can't be depended upon. You and Krebs and Yates buckle on your guns, and wear them night and day. Don't let one of the cutthroats come upon the saloon deck under any pretext. I'll sound out the Hindu, and give him a weapon if I think it's safe, but I won't trust the Portuguese or the stowaway. There is no blackleg like an English gentleman who has gone wrong."

"Very well, sir. Wouldn't it be a good

idea to put in at Colombo long enough to land the *Sao Paolo* people? We could hide the Hindus, on board."

"No," replied the skipper slowly. "They all know he is on board, and if they are looking for him ashore, these fellows would betray him."

Williams rose to go.

"You are the captain," he said; "but I hate to be shipmates with that outfit a day longer than is necessary. You've got a sentimental streak, skipper."

"I'm a damn fool," admitted Captain Goodwin; "but I gave the fellow my word."

"I'll go get my gun, and tell the second and third to wear theirs. Duncan better be armed also, don't you think?"

"I suppose so."

CHAPTER IX.

SHIPLOAD OF MYSTERY.

AS John Williams set forth to carry out the skipper's orders, he was turning over in his mind the curious series of events which had complicated, already, the simple problem of the homeward voyage.

He had been three years on the *Cannonmore*, joining her as third officer and rising rapidly to first mate, yet in the last couple of days there had been more mystery and excitement than during his entire term of service in the ship. Although he had made light of his relief expedition to Miss Warrington, it was the first time that he had ever commanded a lifeboat to effect a rescue during a gale at sea; such adventures are far from common in the life of a seaman. It was the first time that the ship had carried passengers, or that there had been a variation of that dreary routine of which Krebs had been complaining, while they lay off the river mouth near Cittagong.

Krebs was a typical British merchant officer, son of a drayman in London, who had shipped as a common seaman upon a sailing ship, and climbed the various grades until he was able to move his belongings into an officer's cabin—a decent, hard-working, honest fellow, who spent his days ashore in the waterfront section of London or Liverpool, read little,

thought not much more, took things as they came, and, in the course of time, would get a ship and handle her with commonplace competence.

Williams was the son of a parson in Devonshire; he had received an excellent preparatory education, and was destined for a university, but he had rebelled against the future his father planned, for he saw little hope for a university graduate with no profession which could support him. He had always loved the sea, and when the chance came to get a cadetship upon a training ship for merchant marine officers, he had persuaded his father to permit him to accept it. The training ship had been a four-masted steel sailing ship; there he learned to run up the rigging, to help furl a great, square sail, to handle ropes; and he had attended the ship's classes in the art of navigation. After graduation, he had served a year as a midshipman upon a big passenger liner to South Africa, and was qualified to accept a berth as fourth officer upon a freight steamer running regularly from Liverpool to South America. From that he had moved up a step to the *Cannonmore*. He now held a master's ticket, and was qualified to command a ship when the opportunity arose, an opportunity which might not occur for ten years yet, or might come to-morrow. He was twenty-seven years old, and had been engaged to be married to a young woman of good family in Manchester, whom he had first met during his service upon a passenger boat. She had promised to wait until he got his ship.

Although poor Krebs affected to despise the training ship graduates, and could see no difference socially between himself and his friend, the first officer had the instincts and manners of a gentleman, despite his years in rough company. A girl like Florence Warrington recognized at a glance the difference between him and the second officer.

JOHN was thinking of her, at the moment, as part of the astonishing situation upon the *Cannonmore*, for the excitement had begun with her arrival on board. Florence and her mother were rather mysterious; their straitened con-

dition in Cittagong needed explanation, an explanation which they seemed to have no desire to make; and he agreed with the skipper that the stowaway was not a stranger to them.

The stowaway was a mystery, also; evidently he was a man who had seen better days. There are many such on the beaches of the South Sea islands, whom the better classes describe as beach combers; but in the Indian possessions of Great Britain, where the supremacy of the white race is tremendously important, white Englishmen are rarely permitted to sink to the level of the beach comber. A way is usually found to ship the drunkards and wastrels to Australia or back home—anywhere, so long as they are not a horrible example to the East Indians of the depths to which a white man can sink. He said that his name was Lynch, an Irish name; but the fellow was undoubtedly an Englishman. The man was a drunkard, perhaps a dope fiend, who must have been very desperate when he stowed away in the bunkers of a steamer carrying a lascar crew; yet he had stepped forward like a good man when there were lives to be saved, and had volunteered to pull an oar.

Then, there was the Hindu and his princess—if she were a princess—with a fortune in jewels in a belt around his waist, a man who dared not return to Colombo. He was a mystery. John knew something of the care with which the Hindu princes protect their seraglios, and he wondered how a man who claimed to be a merchant had ever made the acquaintance of a rajah's daughter, and secured an opportunity to induce her to elope. Granting that, how had they managed to elude the guards? Was the fortune in gems the property of the big man, or had the princess stolen it from her father? In the latter case, it might be the duty of the captain of the *Cannonmore* to return the stolen property.

Perhaps the Portuguese captain suspected the existence of this belt of jewels and, for that reason, had remained with the Indians. Sousa was a rat and a thief, if Williams ever saw one. And that pirate crew which they had been compelled to take on board—what a handful

they would make, if they started upon a rampage!

He was shaking his head when he unlocked the door of the small room, in which were stored the arms and ammunition. In 1913 piracy was almost unknown; it was no longer necessary for a merchant vessel to arm her crew to repel boarders, and most of the trading in the Far East was done by steamers which were manned by lascars or Chinese, save for a few white officers and seamen. The *Cannonmore* carried a couple of sporting rifles, a dozen revolvers, and a limited supply of ammunition; no cutlasses, pikes or cannon, as did the old East Indiamen.

The lascars had to be handled with gloves, but they were not mutineers. They were commanded by a headman called the "serang," and owed obedience only to him; orders were transmitted through him under ordinary circumstances; though in time of stress, as in the engine room during the storm, a white officer might be forced to hold them in check by pointing a weapon at them. There were thirty lascars on the *Cannonmore*, who could be depended upon neither to lift a hand for or against the officers of the ship.

In view of the presence on board of the crew of the *Sao Paolo*, it seemed to Williams that Captain Goodwin had no business permitting sentiment to keep him from touching at Colombo, but he was too good an officer to disobey orders after he had made his protest.

He picked out a serviceable weapon, not the Colt of the Western plains, but a small effective .44 revolver, which he could carry in his pocket, made sure it was loaded, and dropped it in his right-hand pocket, then took an extra dozen cartridges, and put them in his left-hand pocket. As the third officer happened to be passing, he called to him and equipped him in similar fashion.

"I believe Duncan has a couple of guns in the engine room," the third informed him. "I'll tell him to carry one on his person from now on."

Williams locked the door again, and placed the key with the spare cartridges.

"I don't expect any trouble," he said carelessly, "but I don't like the look of

that gang we picked up. Stand no nonsense from them, and keep your eye on that Yankee. He is capable of anything."

AT dinner that night. Sir Ramdar Mogne and his bride sat at table with Captain Goodwin, Miss Warrington, and the first officer. Krebbs was on the bridge. Yates had volunteered to take his meals in the cabin with Duncan, who had no liking for "high society," as the Scotchman expressed it. The princess wore a dress of Florence Warrington's, much too large for her, but which the American girl had managed to make serviceable by the liberal use of pins. The husband had squeezed himself into a dinner coat of Williams' which was too small, but he bore himself with much dignity, and talked more.

Sailors, who see things as they appear to be and are shy on racial lore, lump all brown and black peoples together with one contemptuous term, but both Captain Goodwin and John Williams were aware that the East Indians are Aryans like ourselves, whose skin has grown brown as a result of thousands of years of exposure to the sun of the tropics, but whose features are classic, and whose glossy black hair is straight, and who, therefore, deserve a good amount of respect and consideration.

Just the same, Sir Ramdar was rather tedious as he spoke careful English and drew upon a vocabulary beyond the limits of the sailormen. His predilection for long words was really the only evidence in his speech of foreign nationality, that and extremely long and complicated phrases and clauses, which might have delighted a grammarian, but which distressed the officers and the American girl.

If the man had been discussing his adventures on the brig or the details of his elopement, they would have been interested, but he persisted in introducing world topics, affairs of state, the rise of socialism, the economic condition of India—subjects upon which his auditors were not too well informed.

The princess looked shy, and said nothing; she was, after all, a child, though, in a land where women are mar-

ried at ten or twelve years of age, a girl of sixteen is considered very mature.

"The man is a windbag," whispered Captain Goodwin, when the savant had fixed his eye upon Florence and was addressing himself particularly to her. "If I knew I'd have to put up with this I'd have landed him at Colombo. We're in for it, now."

The long-drawn-out dinner finally came to an end, to the relief of all except the Hindus. Despite indifferent food, all had managed to make a function of the meal, as English folk everywhere are wont to do; but it was no longer the delightful affair it had been before the storm that had sent the American ladies to their berths and thrown the sinking *Sao Paolo* in the path of the *Cannonmore*.

Much to his regret, for he hoped for a few words with Florence, Williams had to go on duty immediately after dinner, and from the bridge he saw the second officer sitting beside the young woman in an effort to make hay while the sun shone.

If the first officer had not had a conscience, Krebbs would have served as one, for he did not fail to remind Williams at every good opportunity that he was an engaged man. Poor Krebbs had capitulated to the attractions of Miss Warrington from the first moment he clapped eyes upon her, had taken her arrival as a special favor of Providence to himself, and hoped, during the long voyage, to overcome his habitual shyness with women. Her affability he had mistaken for willingness to be wooed, and, if the chief officer would behave himself, Krebbs thought he ought to win her in the course of a couple of months. Unfortunately, he became self-conscious in her presence, sat tongue-tied beside her, and answered her polite conversational efforts with monosyllables.

John did not need the reproaches of his friend to cause him uneasiness, but he was still assuring himself that his interest in Florence was due to the peculiar circumstances surrounding her presence on board. Her presence at the rail when he set forth with his boat crew had thrilled him and made him indifferent to the peril of the sea; her eyes had fired

him when she had congratulated him so sweetly, and he could not help watching her every move and admiring her grace and poise.

HE came off the bridge at midnight to find the girl still sitting there on deck. She was quite alone; for Krebbs had obeyed the call of duty.

It was an opportunity he could not evade, conscience or no conscience. On a night like this he had proposed to the English girl on the South African liner and had been accepted. Yet there had been singularly little romance in his engagement; for Claire was cold and not too pretty; her manner was almost boyish, and her kisses were pecks on the cheek. Williams had been in love with love, and with time and place right, she had served as the girl. During his voyages he was able to idealize her and thrill at the thought of her, but when he went to visit her, he did not have such a good time.

"This is wonderful," he observed, as he dropped into the chair beside Florence. "I dared not hope you still would be on deck."

"Our cabin is so stuffy, and mother is querulous. I am hoping she will be asleep when I go down. Your Hindus are charming; but I wish we had more state-rooms. Of course, I was glad to give up mine to them."

"I don't like the man," he said shortly. "The girl is pretty, but those native women are so stupid."

"But she is nothing more than an infant. You could not expect her to be very intelligent at her age. She is a darling. Oh——" She had caught her breath with a frightened sigh.

"What's the matter?" he asked, realizing that something had alarmed her.

"Nothing," she replied, with an attempt at a laugh. However, following her gaze, he saw the stowaway leaning against the deck house some twenty feet away, arms folded, head bent on his breast.

"What are you doing there?" Williams cried harshly.

The man immediately came forward, and stood before them sullenly.

"Mr. Duncan wishes to see you, sir. I was waiting until you were at liberty," he said, respectfully enough. The man had been outfitted from the "slop chest," and had been put on the articles as a seaman, since the affair of the lifeboat.

"If you will excuse me, I shall go see what he wants," said the chief officer.

"Please conduct me to the saloon, first," Florence said, rising and grasping his arm. He fancied she was trembling.

Leading her to the entrance, he helped her over the step, then turned sharply to find the stowaway close on his heels.

"What do you want here?" he shouted. "Go aft where you belong."

"Yes, sir. It's terribly important. Mr. Duncan wants to see you at once."

"Oh, all right. Is he in his cabin?"

"No, sir, at the engine-room entrance."

John went aft along the saloon deck, descended the ladder to the main deck, and found Duncan standing before the engine-room deck grating, smoking his pipe.

"What's the matter, Duncan?" he demanded.

"Matter enough," retorted the chief engineer. "While you're playing Don Juan with the leddies, they's been murder done. Look."

He drew him past the engine-room companionway and pointed. Lying across the grating lay the body of a man, upon whose face Duncan played his flash light. It lighted the saturnine visage of the Portuguese captain of the brig, distorted by death agony, the hilt of a knife protruding from his chest.

CHAPTER X.

MURDER.

WILLIAMS stooped and touched the face of the corpse. It was still warm, and he observed that the wound in the hairy chest was quite fresh.

"He was alive ten minutes ago," said Duncan. "It must ha'e happened a minute before I came up on deck, but there was no sight nor sound of the murderer. The man Lynch was coming down the deck from his quarters, and I sent him to fetch ye. No need to alarm the young leddy."

The chief officer shook his head sadly. "I detested the man; but this was a dreadful end for him. Got your gun in your pocket?"

"I ha'e."

"Then come with me. The *Sao Paolo* crew are supposed to be locked up in the stern deck house. Let's have a look at them."

At the skipper's order they had driven the cutthroats to their quarters at dark, locked them in and put a lascar on guard outside the locked door; nevertheless, it was logical to believe that one of these men had slain the captain. Captain Goodwin was now in his bunk, and Williams thought he might as well secure as much information as possible before he made his report.

The prison of the boat's crew was a steel house, about thirty feet wide and twenty feet long, in which chains, ropes, boxes and odds and ends were usually stored. There was a passage about two feet wide entirely around it at the stern, and upon its roof was the auxiliary steering apparatus. It was lighted by two small, square windows at the stern end, and the steel door had a strong bolt on the outside. The lascar was sitting on the deck with his back against the door, fast asleep, and the bolt was shot, which meant that no person had reentered the deck house if he had once made his exit. Williams woke up the man, but did not try to question him, for he spoke no English.

He pushed him aside and drew the bolt. While Duncan threw the beam of his flash light into the room, Williams, gun in hand, entered and pressed the button of the single electric lamp which hung from the ceiling.

The *Sao Paolo* crew were lying about on the straw, old mattresses, and blankets which had been supplied them. Despite the open windows, the room smelled strongly of perspiring low-class humans. Some of them appeared to have been asleep and were blinking at the sudden light; others were resting on their elbows and scowling at the intruders.

There was no more kind-hearted skipper afloat than Captain Goodwin. Ordinarily, he would have done everything

possible to make comfortable a shipwrecked crew, but he had no sympathy for this outfit. Their appearance alone would have condemned them, had he not knowledge that they had mutinied and abandoned their ship in the only boat, leaving a woman passenger, her husband, and their own captain aboard; and he had seen the mate deliberately kick a drowning man in the head. Therefore, he treated them as he felt they deserved.

Standing in the center of the room, Williams counted carefully, and noted the American mate on his pallet, the big negro, the two Chinamen, the Malays and the Portuguese—all present and accounted for.

Without satisfying their curiosity as to his visit, he moved to the portholes and examined them. It was not possible that any man could have squeezed himself through such a small opening as these afforded, and there was no other course of exit possible. While he had no doubt until now that the murder had been committed by one of these men—and he particularly suspected the mate—he was compelled to yield to the evidence. Besides, they all had been disarmed, and Sousa had been slain with a knife.

The American scrambled to his feet and approached truculently.

"What's the idea of coming in here and waking us up?" he demanded. "And while we're about it, I protest against sticking the mate of the *Sao Paolo* in a den like this with these dogs. This ain't no way to treat shipwrecked men, anyway. The food we got was fit for pigs."

"Pigs ate it," retorted Williams. "You talk small, my man, because you'll probably have to stand trial for killing that sailor at the bottom of the rope ladder. I woke you up to see if you were all here."

"Do me a favor, mister?" asked the mate. "Put that rat of a Captain Sousa in here with us. We caught him trying to make his getaway in the only boat, and we'd like to talk to him."

"Go back to your bed," commanded the chief, who would not inform the man that Sousa was dead. The request might be a sly way of inquiring whether the Portuguese had been killed or only

wounded by the knife thrust, providing that the Yankee was aware of the assault upon his ex-captain. "Come on, Duncan," he added, to the chief engineer. "Let's get out of this."

GUIDED by the flash light, after extinguishing the bulb, and followed by a low snarling from the human beasts lying in the darkness, he made his way out of the place and breathed thankfully the pure night air outside. After bolting the door and warning the lascar in pantomime to keep awake, they went forward, discussing the alarming situation.

"They were all there," said Duncan. "None of those bodies could ha'e got oot. Who killed the dago?"

"I measured those portholes. I am sure only a small boy could possibly have worked his way through them. They were all present and accounted for. At first, I supposed there was a simple explanation of the murder, but I don't see how any of the *Sao Paolo* crew could have killed the man."

"Then who stuck the knife in the feller?"

"Somebody who was not under lock and key. A member of the crew or a passenger. I want to question that man Lynch."

"He's an Englishman. The English don't use knives, any more than the Scots?"

"Then why do you Scotch wear a dirk in your stocking when you are in Highland costume?" replied the chief officer, smiling.

"Tis a hunting knife, mon. Perhaps ye're suggesting that I stuck the dago."

"Don't be a fool, Duncan. You said yourself that Lynch was coming along the deck when you found the body. What was he doing on deck?"

"It was time for him to go on watch in the engine room."

"Well, have him come up, and we'll question him."

The chief engineer descended the ladder a few feet and shouted down; and in a moment the stowaway was seen coming rapidly upward.

"Lynch," said Duncan, "Mr. Williams has some questions tae ask ye."

"About the murder, I suppose?"

Williams nodded.

"You came directly from your berth to the engine-room entrance?"

"Yes, sir," he said, in his sullen way.

"Did you see the body before Mr. Duncan discovered it?"

"No, sir. I was some distance away when Mr. Duncan came out on deck, and he was bending over it when I came up. He told me to call you, and I ran up to the saloon deck, but you were talking to the young lady. I didn't want to alarm her."

"Quite right. Now, Mr. Duncan says the man could not have been struck more than a few moments before he discovered the body. Did you see any one on deck as you came along?"

"No, sir, not a soul."

"It was quite bright, just as it is now, wasn't it?"

The stowaway hesitated a second.

"No, sir, I think it was dark at the oment; the moon was behind a cloud."

"Did you hear anything?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Where's your knife?" Williams asked sharply.

"I have no knife, sir."

"W-ell, you can go back to your work for a minute. Just a moment. Didn't I see you talking to the dead man to-day?"

Lynch shrugged his shoulders.

"He was trying to talk to me; but I don't understand Portuguese."

"All right. Go below."

When the man had gone down the ladder, the chief officer turned to Duncan.

"What do you think? Was the deck dark when you came on deck?"

The Scotchman scratched his head.

"I don't know but it was, for a minute; but the moon came right out again."

"I hate to wake up the skipper, but we'll have to notify him at once. We haven't much information to give him."

CHAPTER XI.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE.

CAPTAIN GOODWIN was on the scene five minutes after he was called, and made a careful inspection of the body. Like most freight ships, the *Can-*

nonmore carried no physician; but the skipper had a few medical books containing symptoms of diseases and their remedies, a chest of drugs to be administered in case of need, and some slight knowledge of surgery. He could set a broken limb and bandage a wound in case of need, and in this case there was no need of a doctor.

He had the body lifted and laid on deck, where he examined it by the light of a flash. He examined the weapon which had been used. It was a sailor's knife with a plain hilt, which afforded no clew. Sometimes seamen scratch their names on the blades; but this blade was unscratched. The skipper frowned, and shook his head.

"If we hadn't locked up that boat's crew, I would have been sure that one of them had done it. Their animosity against the poor man was evident, but you say they were all secure in the stern deck house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then it was the stowaway. How do we know how long he was on deck? He might have run away a few paces after striking the blow, and then brazenly started back, as though he was just coming from his berth."

"What motive could he possibly have for killing the Portuguese?" asked Williams.

"Well, we know that Duncan didn't do it, or you. And the second officer was on the bridge, I was asleep in my bunk, and so was Yates. The stowaway was in sight when Duncan found the body, which means Lynch could have done it. He is the only person available to suspect, and you had better lock him in a room."

"It's hard for me to believe the poor lad knifed the mon," sighed Duncan.

The captain studied for a moment.

"I don't say he did; but we don't know that he didn't, and for safety's sake we'd better put him under arrest. Besides, if the deed was done by somebody else, it will make him feel uneasy to know an innocent man is accused, and he may betray himself. Lynch is no better than he should be, anyway."

"Aweel," sighed the engineer, "I suppose it canna be prevented."

When Duncan had gone to inform the stowaway that he was suspected and must be confined, the captain passed his arm through that of the first officer, and walked aft with him to examine the stern deck house once more.

"Something like this is what I feared," he said. "And even now, I would lay a wager it's one of the *Sao Paolo* men who got out. The stowaway had never set eyes on the Portuguese until we took him off the brig, while these fellows had reasons for wishing to kill him. You see why I instructed you all to go armed?"

"Yes, sir; you were quite right."

"The trouble is I must break my promise to the Hindu, and head for Colombo. Since a murder has been committed on my ship, it would look very queer if I passed the nearest British port—and one which I was scheduled to make without stopping."

"It's the only thing to do, sir. The Hindu must take his chances."

"Yes, poor fellow. No chances of hiding him, because the authorities will come on board and question everybody on the ship."

"Of course, sir."

"Go up and report the happenings to Krebs. Ask him to send a couple of seamen to sew up the body in canvas, and we'll drop it over in the morning. No chance to keep the fellow in this climate, even to please the police. Then you might as well turn in. I'm going to. Good night, John."

From the high bridge of the *Cannonmore*, it was possible to obtain a perfect view of the main deck forward and the forecabin; but the saloon deck house interfered with vision aft, and the engine-room entrance was invisible. However, in the moonlight, John could see the entrance of the stern deck house and the figure of the lascar who was now moving up and down, guarding it.

Krebs had heard no outcry from the murdered man, and was shocked at the news. He sent one of the quartermasters to rouse a comrade and remove the body—useless to ask the lascars to touch it.

At seven in the morning, Florence Warrington was awakened in affright by a dreadful cry from the next stateroom oc-

cupied by the Hindu and his bride, followed by wild lamentations in a woman's voice. Her mother, roused by the same cry, sat up so suddenly that she bumped her head on the upper berth and emitted a wail. Williams had heard the cry and rushed forth, clad only in shirt and trousers, and stood in the saloon, uncertain from whence it had come. A second later, Florence, in her Japanese kimono, rushed out of her room.

"Did you cry out?" he demanded.

"No," Florence said excitedly. "It came from the room next to mine. I think it was the princess."

In two strides John reached the door and pounded upon it.

"What's the matter in there?" he called.

He could hear the woman sobbing; but she did not answer.

"Open this door, or I'll break it in."

CHAPTER XII.

THE STRANGLER.

THE sobbing stopped, he heard a shuffle, and a moment later the door opened inward. The little Hindu girl stood there, her face distorted with grief; she pointed at the lower berth, and there lay Sir Ramdar Mogne, still and silent, the expression of his face indicating that he had died of suffocation.

"He is dead, quite dead!" exclaimed his wife.

"Good Lord!" ejaculated the Englishman, as he moved to the berth and stooped to inspect the corpse. The cause of death was evident, for a piece of quarter-inch rope was knotted around his neck.

"The bowstring!" exclaimed Williams. "Two murders in one night."

The princess was pulling at his arm.

"Look; he has been robbed!" she cried, as she pulled down the sheet which covered him. The man's pajama coat was rolled up, and a red mark around his waist showed where his belt had been worn.

"Much jewels he had," the girl explained. "Some one did steal his belt."

"Is he dead?" asked Florence.

"Quite dead," replied Williams, stand-

ing erect again. "Please go back to your room, Miss Warrington."

But Florence opened her arms, and the poor little widow sought the refuge of them; then the American girl led her out of the death cabin into the saloon, where the Chinese steward and his boy stood gaping. The legs of Captain Goodwin, coming down the stairs from his quarters, were visible.

The skipper looked into the cabin, over the shoulder of the chief officer, who was still shaken by his discovery and wondering what to do next. Goodwin sensed the situation at a glance and turned to Florence.

"Take the poor little girl up to my quarters, Miss Warrington, and please remain with her. These Eastern widows sometimes do desperate things. Now, Williams, how did this fellow die?"

John pointed mutely to the rope.

"The bowstring!" the captain exclaimed. "That's an Oriental trick. My Lord! What else is going to happen on my ship?"

"He was robbed. Somebody has the jewel belt."

Goodwin nodded.

"Evidently. Well, the murderer is still on board, and so are the jewels. I'll see that neither get ashore. How long has this man been dead, do you think?"

"Hours, I should say, sir. He is stiff and cold."

"First the Portuguese, and now the Hindu. The same man killed them both."

"The methods are different, sir."

"Only because he didn't dare try a knife up here. A garroted man can't cry out. How did he get in?"

"Through the cabin window, I presume, sir. The door was locked and the blind on the stateroom was up; but a thief could manage that."

THE captain examined the window. As the ship was built for the tropics, the windows of the officers' cabins, opening upon the saloon deck, were about eighteen inches high, by twelve inches square, protected by a blind and a mosquito screen, as well as thick window glass, and could be covered by a steel

shutter operated from without, when the weather was very rough.

"Look!" Hanging from a hook, which held the screen in place when it was in use, was an inch of cloth. "A piece of his shirt," said the skipper.

"Every man on board who has a shirt wears one like that," objected the mate. "It's soiled white cotton."

"Yes. Let's get out of here; dead men give me the creeps, though I've seen a lot of them. The fellow forced the blind, climbed through, and quietly bowstringed the poor Hindu while he slept. If the princess had moved or stirred, he would have treated her the same way. Get the body moved out of the stateroom and sewed up in canvas as soon as possible. He may have been dead eight or nine hours, already. What time did you last see the man?"

John frowned and concentrated.

"He was on deck talking to Miss Warrington for a long time, and so was the girl. We can find out from her exactly when he went in. I should say it was about eleven o'clock."

"The murderer gave him at least an hour to fall asleep, which would set the time no earlier than midnight; and most likely he would wait a couple of hours. Confound it, John! That means he was killed about the same time as the Portuguese, or afterward. And if afterward, it could not have been done by the stowaway, because he was under arrest. I never thought of that."

"I did," said Williams. "This Lynch is a down-and-out Englishman, probably as unscrupulous as they make them, who might have knifed Sousa in a scuffle; but I doubt if he would have the nerve to commit two murders within an hour. Besides, strangling a man is a fine art. Even if Lynch were capable of making the attempt, I don't believe if he would know how to twist the rope to prevent the victim making a sound. Those Malays, or Chinamen, or even the negro in the stern deck house might accomplish such a feat; or one of our own lascars may be a professor of the art; but Lynch could hardly have done it."

They had seated themselves at the cabin table, upon which the unruffled

Chinese steward was setting the breakfast dishes, under the assumption that no matter how many might be slain, the survivors would continue to eat; and now the skipper banged so hard upon the board that the dishes leaped.

"I'll find out if Lynch is innocent!" he exclaimed. "We grabbed him immediately after the murder of Sousa and clapped him in the brig, so he has had no time to change his shirt, if he has two shirts. If this piece of cloth did not come from his shirt, it proves him innocent."

"No, skipper; it proves he did not kill Mogne, but he might have murdered Sousa, for all of it."

"That's so, John. Well, it's something to know that he is innocent of one crime, and it will prove that the murderer is still walking around, considering who will be his next victim."

Beneath the saloon was a section which was partitioned into several compartments, lighted by small deadlights in the vessel's side. This section was reached by a narrow staircase from the pantry, and contained an entrance at the after end directly from the main deck.

Here was the ship's ice house, where were kept the food supplies of the cabin; also a room known as the slop chest, because it was packed with seamen's clothing, blankets, bedding, et cetera; the carpenter shop, which contained a small forge and anvil; and the brig, in which the unfortunate stowaway was locked at present. The chief officer carried keys for the various rooms; and now, accompanied by the skipper bearing his "clew," he descended to this unpleasant place, and opened the door of Lynch's prison, the air of which was already foul.

THE light was burning, and they saw the prisoner lying on a low bunk, apparently asleep.

"Wake up!" thundered Captain Goodwin. "How the hell can the man sleep in this den?"

Lynch started, swung his feet to the floor, and gazed at them, stupidly for a moment, then resentfully.

"Can't you let a man sleep after putting him here?" he growled.

"You're talking to the captain, Lynch," warned Williams.

The stowaway stood up, instinctively at a soldierly attention.

"Peel off that shirt, and let's have a look at it," commanded the skipper.

Apparently surprised, the man pulled off his shirt, soiled, sleeveless and damp with perspiration, and passed it over. The captain inspected it very carefully, and handed it back without a word.

"All right," he said. "You can lay down again."

Lynch made an appealing gesture.

"Captain, I had nothing to do with killing that Portuguese," he pleaded. "You have no evidence against me; I came upon the chief engineer when he was bending over the body. I can prove that the third engineer routed me out only a couple of minutes before. I may be down and out and guilty of stowing away on your ship; but that's a long way from being a murderer."

The skipper listened, and seemed to be affected by his argument.

"I locked you up for the night and intend to have an investigation this morning," he said. "If the third engineer testifies he called you at eight bells, I shall turn you loose."

"Thank you, sir. It's terrible in here."

"You may not be here much longer."

The officers withdrew, locked the door of the brig, and returned to the cabin for another conference, but found it occupied now by Mrs. Warrington. She showed few traces of her spell of seasickness, but was pale with fright, for she had learned from the steward that a man had been murdered as he lay with his head a few inches from her feet, on the other side of a half-inch board partition.

"Who killed the poor man, captain?" she demanded.

"We don't know, but we have the stowaway locked up on suspicion," he replied.

The woman was ghastly pale.

"Why—why—it's impossible! He couldn't—it's absurd," she mumbled.

"Indeed? What makes you think so? Did you ever see the man before he came on this ship?" asked the skipper sharply.

Mrs. Warrington got control of her-

self, and managed a glance of reproachful surprise.

"How could you think such a thing?" she demanded. "Of course not. But he is a white man, an Englishman. With all these foreigners on board, why suspect one of our own kind?"

"My dear Mrs. Warrington," he replied, "the Hindu is the second person killed on this ship during the night. The first was the Portuguese captain, Sousa, who was knifed. The stowaway was the only person in the vicinity, and we locked him up on suspicion; but I am inclined to doubt his guilt, for the second crime was probably committed after he was safe under lock and key."

"Then there is a murderer loose on board? Oh, catch him, captain! We all may be killed in our beds."

"I propose to catch him," the skipper said grimly. "Please go to your cabin, now, madam, because the body is going to be removed, and it's no sight for a delicate woman."

He gave her his arm to her stateroom door, bowed her within, and returned.

"Let's go out on deck," he said shortly. Once on deck, he said to Williams: I am sure Mrs. Warrington knows this fellow Lynch, but we don't want to pry into her private affairs, unless it is necessary. On the other hand, we do not wish her to overhear our conversation—and the partitions are thin. Of course, we make for Colombo; we're about seven hundred miles away, and ought to arrive in two days and a half. Meanwhile, get a Marconi off, notifying the agent in Colombo that we rescued the crew of the brig, and that two of the survivors have been killed on board during the night. Have the serang call his lascars on deck; and you better inspect their shirts yourself. We'll look over our own people afterward. We've got to land that murderer before darkness.

"While you are occupied with the natives on deck, have Yates go through their berths and what luggage they have, for the jewel belt. I'll take Duncan and search the cabin of every white man on board while they are out for inspection. Ask Duncan to get the third engineer's testimony, and if he corroborates the

statement of the stowaway, release the fellow. Then make a search of the stern deck house for the jewels. Of course, none of those scoundrels got out, but we can't take anything for granted. Tell the steward to clean out the bedding and thoroughly air the dead man's cabin. I don't suppose the girl will want to sleep there again, but I'm sure I don't know where to put her if she won't. I'm going up to my quarters to question the poor little thing. If Miss Warrington is willing to stay with her, perhaps I shall give them my cabin, and sleep in the stateroom myself."

"That's awfully white of you, sir."

The captain made a grimace.

"I love the ladies, but they are a terrible nuisance on board ship."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MAN HUNT.

IMMEDIATELY all was activity on the *Cannonmore*. The lascars crew, save those at work in the stokehole, were lined up on the main deck forward. All wore shreds of shirts, and submitted stoically while the serang, with the wisp of cotton cloth in his hand, and closely followed by Williams, inspected them carefully. But no shirt was found which dovetailed with the clew.

In the meantime, Yates, holding his nose, and accompanied by a quartermaster, was investigating the contents of the fore-castle. Some of the lascars owned nothing in the world except the garments on their backs; others had little bundles containing clothes, bits of silver and copper jewelry, and one or two had torn copies of the Koran, which the owners probably could not read. The search was fruitless. The wireless was spitting a message into the air. The operator was a solemn, saturnine person named Jenks. This man was the son of a British soldier and an Indian mother. He was yellow skinned and red-headed.

The skipper learned from the princess that she had gone below with her husband at ten-thirty, and immediately had been lifted into the upper berth, while the big man stretched himself in the lower and extinguished the light. She said she had

fallen asleep almost immediately, and heard no sound during the night.

Florence readily agreed to occupy the captain's cabin with the bereaved little creature; and the skipper then decided to inspect personally the quarters of his officers, engineers, and the half dozen white seamen. He was accompanied on his rounds by the chief engineer, who poked into boxes and bags, and peered into lockers, holes and corners, with the inquisitiveness of a whiskered cat.

The radio cabin on the top deck was the next place visited.

"Did you send the message?" asked the skipper.

"Yes, sir; but I have not picked up a reply yet."

"All right. Now open your boxes, and let us search your cabin. We are trying to find some evidence of property of the Hindu which was stolen by the murderer."

"Certainly, sir."

The search of Jenks' quarters was as abortive as had been the inspection of others; but the skipper persevered, and went through the cook's galley and the sleeping quarters of the chef and steward, with great care.

"How many jewels were there, captain?" asked the Scotchman, when they finally returned to the saloon.

"The princess said there were twenty-four, including some big diamonds, but she had no idea of their value. They could be hidden in a few inches of space very easily. Nobody will leave this ship until they are found."

"How much might they be worth, in yer estimation, captain?"

"Depends upon the size. If the three stones he showed me were the least valuable, then the collection might run to fifty thousand pounds, perhaps twice that; if they were the best stones, then fifteen or twenty thousand pounds!"

Doubtless, the widow will offer a reward for their recovery?"

"No reward," said the skipper grimly. "Woe to the man that has them, for it proves him a murderer."

"Aye, I hadna thought o' that."

"Now I'm going to have a look in the stern deck house," declared the skipper.

"I'll take Williams with me. Keep your eyes open, Duncan."

"I don't wet my whistle while those jewels are loose. It's my belief our troubles have just begun."

"If you see anybody acting suspiciously, shoot first, and ask an explanation afterward."

SENDING for the chief officer, Captain Goodwin went to the deck house, where he found the serang talking to the lascar on guard.

"Any disturbance?" asked Williams.

"Yes, sahib. They pound on the door and demand to come out."

"They don't get out," the skipper stated. "With one murderer roaming the ship, those cutthroats remain under lock and key."

The instant the door opened, the gang within set up a clamor in three or four languages, which was stilled when the skipper and first officer entered with revolvers in their hands.

"We are suffocating here, sir," protested the Yankee. "We have a right to go out on deck. Even prisoners get exercise."

"I'll let you out, one by one, under guard," replied the captain, "for half an hour's exercise. Look here, Williams. Weren't there eight of them?"

"Why, yes," said the perplexed chief officer, whose eye had already noted that there were but seven men in the room.

"Line up your men, Mr. Mate," the skipper commanded. "Now, who's missing?"

"One of the Malays, sir," Williams reported. "Crane, how did that fellow get away? When did you miss him?"

"When we woke up this morning, sir," replied the Yankee. "He must have got away while we slept. We thought you might have entered and removed him for some reason."

Williams saw the man was lying and wasted no time on him, but went directly to the portholes and inspected them again. The opening was only eight inches, impossible of exit, even for one of the undersized Malays; yet, knowing his ship the captain was aware that the man must have left by the tiny window.

The frame of the window was of steel, about two inches thick, fastened by three-inch bolts which were held in place by nuts below the frame. Without really divining the method of escape, Goodwin felt with his strong fingers for one of the nuts, which twisted readily in response to pressure, and he turned like a flash to read in the eyes of the mate of the *Sao Paolo* the secret of the disappearance of the Malay. The men had managed to loosen the nuts, remove the bolts, and lift the frame from its place, which increased the size of the opening to twelve inches, and made it possible for a small man to wiggle through.

"He got out through this port, captain," the chief officer reported. "I'll have the carpenter in here to flatten the ends of these bolts, so they can't lift out the window frame again."

He saw the dismay in the faces of the prisoners, then observed that the negro and the Yankee were edging around behind the skipper.

If they could overpower the captain and chief officer and get possession of their weapons, the *Sao Paolo* crew might take the ship; and this was their obvious intention.

"Get back against the wall, you two, quick!" he commanded, and enforced his order by covering the pair with his gun. At the same instant, the skipper swung about, saw his danger, and brought his weapon to bear. Cowed, the pirates backed up against the wall.

"I'll keep them covered," said the skipper, "while you tell the serang to send the carpenter with a sledge hammer. We'll block further exit from this place."

IN a few moments the carpenter arrived and, protected by the officers, soon made it impossible to remove the nuts from the window bolts. The prisoners squatted, and watched the operation stolidly.

When they had left the deck house and bolted the door, the captain breathed a sigh of relief.

"It's lucky you twigged that porthole trick, John," he said. "To-night they were all coming out to pay us a call. But there is a Malay loose on the ship, and

we've got to find him. When we get him we'll find the murderer of Sousa and Ramdar, and we'll probably discover the jewels in his pocket."

"He didn't kill Sousa, captain," replied Williams, "because I visited their quarters after the murder, and the Malay was still a prisoner at that time. He escaped after I left, and it must have been an hour's work for them to loosen those nuts with their naked fingers. I can't understand how they managed. Most likely, he killed the Hindu. Some Malays understand the business of bow-stringing."

"If he has got in between decks, it is going to be a devil of a job to find him, and he may have got hold of a knife. Summon the white crew and comb the ship from stem to stern. Go slow, take your time, but don't overlook a possible hiding place. We've got to capture him before dark."

"I suggest we put a couple of armed men as guards at the stern deck house, sir. The plan probably is to have him overpower the lascar there, unbolt the door, and let them all out-to-night."

"All right. Do that. What is it, Yates?"

"Please, sir, the cook reports that his galley has been entered and his two sharpest carving knives stolen."

The skipper and chief exchanged glances.

"The fellow is armed, now," said the captain. "And a Malay with a long knife is a tough customer. Get busy, Mr. Williams."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The man hunt began at the bow and moved slowly aft. They searched the lifeboats, the forecastle, saloon deck house, engine room, stokehole, and coal bunkers, while the ladies watched curiously from the upper deck. Lynch was released from the brig and sent on duty into the engine room where he could be watched, although he was almost free from suspicion. At the end of an hour the search party had reached the stern and inspected every possible hiding place without results.

Jute, as the reader probably knows, is the fiber of an Asiatic plant, a member

of the linden family, which is used in the manufacture of bagging and coarse cloth; it is put up in packages slightly smaller than cotton bales. The *Cannonmore* was filled from keel to main deck with it. Although the ship was loaded, there were plenty of nooks and crannies at the sides of the ship and under the ceilings where a man could hide; and it was evident that the Malay must have got into the hold, either from the bunkers or from the store-rooms below the saloon, and was lurking somewhere below, with his two carving knives ready for action.

Williams led the searching party into the hold, and, confident that the fugitive had no firearms, did not hesitate to use his flash light to lighten dark corners. It was dirty work, creeping over the dusty fiber, crawling through narrow spaces, peering for a sight of the desperate murderer, but he did not shirk it.

The hold of the *Cannonmore* was divided into watertight compartments, which served the double purpose of protecting the ship in case of a leak, and confining a cargo fire to the compartment in which it might start. Beginning at the bow, they worked the length of the ship to the stern on the lower deck, and then descended into the hold proper, without a sight of the Malay, and after three or four exhausting hours, the search party emerged into the fresh air, disheartened and disheveled and dirty.

"I was afraid you wouldn't find him below," commented the skipper, when failure was reported. "With a fortune in gems in their hands, these fellows would not hesitate to seize the ship, slaughter us all, scuttle the vessel, and take to one of the lifeboats. We've got three women to protect and our own lives, so no sleep for any white man on board to-night. The Malay is down below. He can only get out of the hold through the store-rooms and through the watertight compartment into the coal bunkers. We'll place an armed man at each exit, two men to guard the prisoners, and we'll patrol the ship all night. I'm going to turn in now for a few hours. You do the same, John. From the instant it gets dark, we shall all be on deck."

"We are four officers, four engineers,

and six seamen. I'll have a talk with the serang and warn him, because they will murder the lascars as quickly as they will kill us. Dead men tell no tales. We have seven prisoners and one enemy at large. I don't think we need to worry, but we must not relax our vigilance."

"Very good, sir. I'll issue the arms at once, and post the guards."

"No, tell Yates to attend to it, and turn in. You will need to be alert to-night."

"Just as you say, sir."

John routed out Yates, who had been sleeping, gave him his orders, and passed through the saloon on the way to his cabin. He encountered Florence Warrington, just coming out of her mother's room.

"Gracious, Mr. Williams!" she said, laughing. "What a sight you are."

"Crawling over jute bales for hours," he replied. "I'm going to wash and turn in."

For no apparent reason she flushed, hesitated, then appeared to make a decision.

"May I speak to you for a few moments, please? There is something I ought to tell you. Not here. Outside on the deck."

"Certainly," he replied, wondering, then led the way into the sunlight.

"Please sit down; it will take a few moments. Mr. Williams, you have been very kind to us; when I have finished I am afraid you will despise us."

John's eyes told her the absurdity of such a statement, but she smiled faintly, and nodded her head.

"We have behaved despicably. It's about the stowaway."

"You know him?" he questioned. "I rather suspected it."

"It's dreadful, Mr. Williams. His name is not Lynch; it's Medfield."

"A relative?"

"My husband. I had to tell you, because you suspect him of being a murderer. He is a bad man, but I can't believe he would kill anybody."

Williams was looking at her with an expression that only half betrayed the consternation he felt, for, although he had not admitted it to himself for a sec-

ond, he was deeply in love with this girl, and the realization came upon him like a knife thrust when she admitted that she was married and that her husband was on board, a man she had ignored, whom she had seen driven like a slave without a protest.

CHAPTER XIV.

FLORENCE MAKES A CONFESSION.

FLORENCE'S lips were quivering, and her eyes were filled with tears, for she had already sensed his feelings toward her, and understood how he must be shocked by the revelation that she had a husband on board the ship, whom she had refused to recognize, although his plight was pitiable.

"I can't excuse my conduct. Mother insisted upon our ignoring him; it was shameful of us."

"You love him," he said. He was numb all over.

"No," she said fiercely. "I hate him. But that does not excuse me. I would like to tell you about it. May I?"

He nodded.

"Next Wednesday will be my twenty-first birthday. I look older, and I feel fifty. My father died three years ago, leaving me a million dollars. Mother and I went to Europe, and, as I was known as very wealthy, we soon had lots of friends. This man made desperate love to me, and I liked him—I thought I loved him. He was a younger son of a noble family, had been in the Guards, and was very popular and handsome. His name is Cecil Medfield. When I asked him if he would marry me if I were poor, he declared he would prefer me that way, and he had plenty for two, anyway. Meanwhile, the fortune which father left me was in the stock of a certain railway, and two weeks before our marriage a combination of capitalists ruined it; we lost everything. I called Cecil to me and confessed our condition, but he laughed and declared he would marry me just the same. Mother was delighted, because she only had an annuity of one thousand dollars a year, and would not have to support me on it. We were married and then the revelation came. Cecil asked me for a check to pay the honeymoon expenses.

"But I have no money!" I exclaimed, shocked. He laughed.

"Come, my dear," he said. "What a romantic little thing you are. You told me that to try my love. Aren't you satisfied?"

"But it's true."

"Don't be ridiculous. You don't imagine I married you without having you looked up. You are worth a million of American dollars."

"I burst into tears and informed him of all the facts; and then he showed himself in his true colors. We had a terrible scene, for he was burdened with debts, and was just a fortune hunter. However, his family came to his rescue and secured him a small post in Calcutta, just enough to live on economically—no more. Mother came with us, because her small income would help, and because, knowing him for what he was, I refused to be separated from her. In Calcutta he went to the bad and he spent his own salary and mother's poor little income. He was usually drunk and sometimes abusive." "The swine!" exclaimed Williams fiercely.

She smiled a wan little smile.

"I deserved it all. Then he misapplied government funds, but because of his family it was hushed up, though he lost his position. After a dreadful time a mercantile house, the head of which was a friend of his father's, gave him a chance, and sent us to a small place outside Cittaogong. There he had no opportunity to handle money, and his salary was about half what it had been before. He went from bad to worse."

"The servants would not stay with us because of his treatment of them. We barely had enough to eat. Then, one day, the police came to arrest him, on a charge of robbing and beating a native gentleman; but he did not return home. Mother's quarterly payment from the insurance company had just arrived, and we decided to return to America, even though we landed penniless in the streets of New York. Thanks to Captain Goodwin, we secured passage on this steamer, and I hoped I had left India and Cecil forever. That's why I fainted when I recognized him in the wretched stow-

away they pulled out of the bunkers. We did not know what to do about him, for, if we told the captain who he was, he might turn Cecil over to the police. You won't betray him?"

"No-o, if you ask me not to; but if the fellow is such a rotter, I'm not so sure he would stop at murder."

"Oh, I'm sure he would. While drunk he might have robbed that native, but he is sober on board, and I am certain he could not commit a cold-blooded murder."

"I'm inclined to agree with you. There is some good left in the man; he volunteered for the lifeboat."

"Yes, that was splendid of him. I'm sure if he gets safe away, he may turn over a new leaf."

"And then you'll take him back, I suppose? You love him."

"No," she declared. "I'll get a divorce. I don't think I ever really loved him; I was just silly."

"Well," he said, with a sigh, "I appreciate your confidence, and I certainly shall not betray it."

They looked at each other in silence. John was too honest to make love to a married woman, and he was bound in honor to another girl; yet they could not control their eyes, which spoke the truth to each other.

"Thank you," she sighed. "Are we in any danger from this Malay?"

"One fugitive against a dozen armed white men? No. Don't worry."

"I feel so much better for confessing," she said. "And please be a little kind to Cecil. After all, he must have suffered a lot."

HE nodded, with a mental reservation.

What a dog, to abuse a sweet wife like this! When she had gone, he moved toward his cabin, then remembered that Yates had time to secure the remainder of the arms, and decided to descend to see what detained him.

He went down the ladder to the main-deck storerooms, and was surprised to see the door of the arms room open and blocking the passage. He hastened his step to close it, but the door struck an obstruction. Drawing it back, he was

horrified to see the third officer lying on his face, the back of his shirt stained with crimson.

"Yates, Yates!" he cried, falling to his knees, and turning the man over. The third lifted his eyelids, and murmured something.

"What happened, man? Speak!"

"Knifed in the back," he whispered. "Just opened the door. Malay, he got me——"

The voice died away, and the man shuddered, then stiffened in death. Williams bellowed for the steward, and sent him to notify the captain, then lifted his friend on his broad shoulders, carried him up the ladder, and laid him in his berth. Then he rushed below again and entered the storeroom. There had been four revolvers in reserve, and these had vanished, with a supply of ammunition.

The Malay had escaped from the hold, if he had ever been there, and had been lurking in the passage when poor Yates came down to secure the arms, had driven a knife in his back, unlocked the door, and made off with four revolvers; and his next move would be to release the prisoners, equip them, and take the ship. It was one thing to hunt down a Malay, armed only with a carving knife, and another to have the man pick off the white crew one by one from a place of concealment.

It seemed to Williams that the best thing to do would be to descend at once upon the stern deck house, manacle the potential pirates within, and move them to the saloon deck house, where it would be possible to keep a strong guard over them without dividing forces. So, locking the almost empty arms room, Williams rushed up the ladder, to encounter Captain Goodwin in the saloon on his way to the scene of the third murder.

"Got four guns!" the captain exclaimed. "Twenty-four shots without reloading. Enough to account for all of us. Yes, round up half a dozen armed men and get those fellows up here without delay; it's bad enough to have one sharpshooter loose without giving him the chance to get reinforcements. Hark! My Lord, shots!"

With drawn weapons, both men ran

out on deck, as a revolver barked from the bridge, where Krebsbs was shooting toward the stern. The Malay had made a dash from the amidships deck house, unopposed by three or four lascar firemen lounging outside the fireroom entrance, and had fired upon the two white men who guarded the door of the stern deck house, dropping one, who lay still, and wounding the other.

Krebsbs, hearing the firing, looked astern and saw the Malay unbolting the door of the prison, and attempted to pot him from the starboard end of the bridge. It was nearly two hundred feet from his position to the door of the stern deck house, a long shot for anybody, and the second officer was not an expert marksman; he missed with all six shots in the weapon, and while he was reloading, the Malay got the door open, and the ruffians within poured out. Both Captain Goodwin and John Williams fired at the mass of men, and seemed to wound one or two of them; but the fellows immediately took cover like a line of skirmishers. The Malay had already passed out three of his stolen guns, and bullets began to fly forward.

At that moment Duncan came up the engine-room ladder, popped out on deck, and looked about in bewilderment.

"Get back! Take cover, you fool!" roared the skipper, who was already lying flat on his stomach, guarding the port ladder to the saloon deck.

A bullet, whizzing by his head, added force to the skipper's warning, and the Scot leaped within the steel companion-way, luckily unscathed.

"Signal to stop the engines. Krebsbs, come down from the bridge and guard the starboard ladder. John, go below and bolt the entrance to this deck house from the main deck. We'll fight it out here. Who have guns?"

"You, Krebsbs, Duncan, myself, the second engineer and Yates.

"Duncan!" shouted the skipper. "Post the second to see that they do not get down the fireroom entrance."

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the Scot, sticking his face out, and drawing it back at the report of a pistol.

John, already dashing through the sa-

loon, was confronted by three terrified women.

"What has happened? Oh, please, tell us!" cried Florence.

"In a moment," he breathed, as he went down the ladder to the main deck like a flash. The steel door was closed, but not bolted on the inside; he made it fast, then bolted the door leading to the ladder to the lower deck, to prevent entrance from the hold. A seaman stood there, armed; evidently the Malay had not obtained entrance this way.

"Get up on the saloon deck and report to the skipper!" John cried. "Hell's broken loose!"

Back in the saloon, he entered the cabin of the late third officer, drew poor Yates' weapon from his pocket, hesitated, then handed it to Florence, who was white faced but composed.

"Use it on yourselves in case of necessity," he said. "The *Sao Paolo* crew is loose and armed. Don't poke your noses outside until we tell you it's safe."

"Can't we do anything?" asked the girl. "I know a little about nursing."

"Then prepare bandages. Keep those women busy." Mrs. Warrington was having hysterics, while the Hindu girl was cowering in a corner, pale and still.

John rushed on deck, forgetting that a figure upright on the saloon deck presented an admirable target. Two revolvers spoke and he dropped, unhurt, to his hands and knees, and crawled to the skipper.

"You guard this ladder with this seaman. I've got an extra gun in my cabin for the quartermaster at the wheel. I'll put him with Jackson at the starboard side, and I'll act as a reserve. Those fellows are well covered. Try to pick one off when you can, because they'll rush us when it gets dark."

CHAPTER XV.

BESIEGED.

IT was then about four in the afternoon, a torrid sun overhead, the sea very calm, and the ship drifting, since the engines had stopped; and there was no longer a man at the wheel.

Several of the pirates had taken cover

behind a donkey engine at the after hatch, an excellent protection; one was behind an iron hoghead on the starboard side, and others were lying flat on the deck, protected by the steel lip of the after hatch. Had they been spared the opening broadside from the saloon and the bridge, they would have reached the fireroom entrance in their rush; but there was an open space of fifty feet which they must cross to make that shelter from which they could pick off those on the saloon deck.

In addition to the four revolvers seized by the Malay, the guns of the seamen who had guarded the stern deck house were in possession of the *Sao Paolo* crew, which gave them six weapons, against eight in the hands of the defenders of the ship.

Captain Goodwin had plenty of ammunition, while the pirates were likely to run short, for the Malay probably had not carried off more than a hundred cartridges. On the other hand, the defenders were divided. Fire from the saloon deck protected those in the engine room and fireroom entrances during daylight, but after dark they might be overpowered.

Forward of the saloon deck house were clustered the lascars who, should they attack the officers from the rear, would decide the battle; but Captain Goodwin had no fear of hostility from them—their fate was bound up with the ship, and they would be neutral.

For perhaps half an hour there was silence on the *Cannonmore*. Darkness would favor the pirates, and when night came they would quickly cover the fifty feet of open deck, and then it would be hand-to-hand. The saloon deck was about eight feet above the main deck, and could be easily scaled by sailing-ship men; most likely they would feint at one side of the ship, and make their main attack at the other. The villainous Yankee who led this scum of the Indian Ocean would be crafty enough to concentrate his forces, after scragging poor Duncan and the second engineer.

Captain Goodwin mustered as reserves in the saloon two seamen and two assistant engineers who happened to be in

their bunks when the outbreak occurred. These he armed with knives; but they would fare poorly in a cold-steel contest with the Chinese Malays and the gigantic negro; in fact, they were a forlorn hope. He sent them down to the storerooms to collect planks and iron junk with which to form a barricade at each ladder head as soon as it was dark enough to go out on deck; and meanwhile, he schemed how to circumvent the enemy.

Florence had put the women to cutting sheets into strips for bandages. The skipper fetched his medicine chest and placed it in her charge.

It was a white-faced company which faced the nightfall.

It seemed to John Williams that they would have a better chance, since they outnumbered the enemy, if they made the rush, instead of waiting to be attacked; and had there not been three women to be protected from the savage brutes, he would have advised taking the offensive, but it was a risk he dared not take. No, they had to guard the saloon with its precious occupants. Yet if one man could get into the rear of the enemy he could pick them off. Caught behind two fires, they could not win. The idea grew. If there were only a line hanging from the stern, up which he could draw himself— If he went overboard forward, and swam along the side of the ship— But Captain Goodwin did not permit lines to hang over the side of his neat vessel. Finally, a desperate expedient occurred to him, but he would have to wait until it was dark, and then it might be too late. Telling the seaman to fire at the first sign of activity, he crawled on his stomach to the saloon entrance and slid over the sill. Florence saw him and gave a glad cry; but the skipper looked at him inquiringly.

"I have a notion, captain. Let us go up to your quarters and discuss it."

THE skipper led the way up the narrow stairs to his cabin on top of the saloon.

"This is the last refuge," he said. "I shall place the women here and defend the ladder if we are driven from the deck."

"I don't think it will be necessary, sir.

Here is my plan: The entrance from below on the main deck is shielded from their view by the engine-room companion and the funnel. When it gets pretty dark, I want to slip out, crawl along the deck, lay low, let them go by me in their rush, and take them from the rear. Otherwise, they will surely get Duncan, and we shall be powerless to help him from the upper deck."

The skipper pursed his thick lips, and half closed his eyes. Then he shook his head.

"It's a daring scheme, lad, but too risky. I can't afford to lose you."

"I'm sure it's safe, sir. They won't be looking for an advance, and I'm certain they'll wait until it is pitch-black night; there's no moon to-night, you know. All I need is dusk to get out unobserved. Meanwhile, you are going to rig a searchlight to light up the foot of the saloon-deck ladders, and I shall be in darkness when they come into the light. I can plug them with safety."

"They'll fire at the flashes of your gun."

"I'll move about."

"I thought of the searchlight," the captain said. "Trouble is, they will shatter it with a few shots, and then we'll all be in the dark."

"The more reason for my scheme."

Captain Goodwin considered a moment longer. Finally he said:

"I'm going to let you do it, though it will break my heart if they get you. The reason is this: These brutes are savage hand-to-hand fighters, and we are peaceable seamen. Even if we had twice as many weapons, we might be beaten. I'll give you two guns."

"You can't spare them, sir. I'll take a knife and my own revolver and plenty of ammunition."

"You're right," the other admitted reluctantly. "If we get out of this alive and you don't, I'll see that the company learns of your self-sacrifice, John."

"We are going to get out of it, all of us," Williams, said confidently; "but I wouldn't give a shilling for our chances if we remained strictly on the defensive."

They shook hands, and descended to the saloon, where John caught the eyes of

Florence fixed on him apprehensively. He hesitated, then went over to her, where she sat fastening bandages.

"Miss Warrington," he said, in a low tone, "you're a married woman and I'm engaged to be married, which would make it impossible to say what I want to say, under ordinary circumstances. But we are in a tight fix, and I may not come out of it alive. If I do, we shall both try to forget what I am going to tell you."

"What is it?" she asked, flushing, for, of course, she knew.

"Just that I love you," he whispered.

The girl gazed at him with a tenderness that yearned.

"I may not escape either," she replied softly. "John I love you, too."

"God bless you," he returned, choking on the words. "Good-by. If we escape, we'll both play the game."

"Of course."

"Your husband is in the engine room. Part of my business is to save him with the others."

"You are going into some special danger?" she asked apprehensively.

"I am going to take our only chance."

He rose and walked to the exit without looking back. Over her bandages she was weeping silently.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BATTLE IN THE DARK.

THE sunset that night was one of the most glorious ever seen in the Indian Ocean, a mélange of the most exquisite colors, though somber dark reds and foreboding purples predominated. Yet it is doubtful if any on board regarded it.

From his chart house window, the captain had summoned the serang, whom he told of the developments aft, and instructed to get his entire band of lascars into the forecabin and to make them stay there until the mutiny was quelled—instructions which the native was glad to obey.

Darkness comes suddenly in those latitudes. Hardly fifteen minutes elapsed before it was deep dusk; and John entered the saloon to be met by the captain, who proposed to escort him and bolt

the door behind him. Florence flitted before them.

"Excuse me, captain," she said, smiling pathetically. "John, please kiss me once. In case we never meet again."

His arms were around her—they kissed—a kiss as ardent as the sunset. Then he took her arms gently from about his neck, patted her shoulder, and said to the skipper, who had turned considerably aside:

"You'll see that she doesn't fall into their hands?"

"Trust me, lad."

With great caution they unbolted the steel door, moved it silently a foot, and the chief officer was outside in the gloom. The door closed, he could hear the bolts grate as they slid into place.

During all this time no shot had been fired from either side, but the battle was lowering.

Six feet from the door was the engine-room companion house, inside which Duncan crouched. It opened on the port side, and John passed it starboard, lest Duncan open upon him, mistaking him for one of the enemy. He slipped past the fireroom entrance, where the second engineer was waiting, and now he was beyond the funnel; and ahead were the enemy. He was lying on his stomach on the deck, wriggling noiselessly aft, teeth clenched, hardly daring to breathe until he finally touched the lip of the after hatch, on the other side of which he knew that three or four men were crouching. He flattened himself against the hatch now, and waited for the rush which would soon come.

Suddenly, a light blazed from the saloon deck, and was immediately extinguished, a light which he knew was prepared to throw its rays upon the main deck at the foot of the saloon ladders when the attack came. The skipper did not wish to give them time to shoot it out.

He heard excited talk in a strange tongue on the other side of the hatch. There the enemy were probably discussing the light. Then he heard a sharp word of command, and he knew that eight pirates were stealing forward, though as yet he could not see them. There was a

chance that he might be stepped upon, which would end him; but they crept by without touching him.

Knowing that those on the upper deck were alert, he waited. He could make out a cluster of black forms, for a second, forward of his position, and he realized that they were moving like himself upon the blind side of the fireroom and engine-room defenders. Evidently their plan was to take the saloon first, and deal with the engineers afterward.

Now it was time for him to move, and he slipped forward in the wake of the storming party, less cautiously than they because, if he were spotted, they would assume that he was one of themselves.

Two or three minutes passed; he had reached the funnel, when a flash and report from the starboard saloon ladder proved that the defenders had seen something. Immediately a series of blood-curdling yells burst forth, and half a dozen guns spat fire from the main deck. Then the light from above disclosed the enemy swarming up the ladder, or leaping for the saloon rail, or standing on the ship's rail, from which it was an easy jump to the saloon deck. *Bang!* a bullet shattered the searchlight, and all was dark save for the gun flashes; but John had seen something. He had hit a man on the ship's rail and heard him shriek as he fell over the side, and a second shot had winged a fellow who was leaping up at the right of the ladder.

Bang! bang! went the revolvers from the deck above. One of the bullets hummed past the chief officer, who now realized he was in danger of being shot by his friends. A pistol flash showed him two pirates already on the upper deck; he shot one. He was only thirty feet away, and still the enemy did not know that there was a hostile behind them.

ANOTHER light lit the upper deck and showed three men fighting on the saloon deck and two on the ladder. With a yell, he rushed forward, firing point-blank at one of the men, and missing the other. The latter turned with a shout and disturbed the chief officer's aim so that his last shot went wide.

The pirate leaped upon him, and Wil-

liams went down under him. A rush of feet from the left indicated something just as the light went out again. A man fell over the brute who had John by the throat. The brute let go his grip with one hand, swished savagely upward with a knife, and the stranger fell, which gave John time to break the hold on his throat.

Now began a terrific struggle upon the iron deck. John's adversary brought his knee up with great force, and the chief officer bellowed with pain from the blow in the stomach. Then John brought his fist so hard against the man's face that the fellow swore—in English.—It was the mate—last up the ladder.

As they fought, John realized that the firing had ceased. Who had won, he had not time to think; for the Yankee was a savage, rough-and-tumble fighter, and knew some shrewd blows.

They rolled against the feet of somebody, and over upon a limp body, and off upon the other side. John was growing weaker, and the mate seemed to be gaining strength; he knew that he could not resist the fellow much longer. Suddenly the man uttered a groan, and his grip relaxed; with a twist John was uppermost, and then was seized by the collar and dragged to his feet—captured.

"Lord bless ye, John," said a broad Scotch voice, and he knew that Duncan was his captor.

"What happened?" he gasped.

"That feller ye was fightin' so hard was the last one; we got all the others. I hit him on the head with the butt o' me gun, here."

"Are the women safe?" John demanded.

"Safe and sound, lad, and askin' about ye. If it wasn't for you and mysel' and the stowaway, they would ha'e cleaned out the saloon."

"Help me up the ladder, quick," Williams urged. "I'm all in."

"It was like this," explained the Scot: "They rushed the saloon ladder, drove the skipper and Krebbs back, laid Krebbs low with a bullet, and knifed the captain—it's a bad wound he got—and they cut up our boys with the knives somethin' dreadful; and if mysel' and the stowaway hadn't sallied forth when we saw how

things was goin', it would ha'e been the end of the *Cannonmore*."

"Is Krebbs dead?" John asked, an-guished.

"Dead as a doornail, purr feller," the Scot said, with a sigh. "I dropped the last pair of them from the saloon doorway when they were cleanin' things up in there. They had almost reached the womenfolks."

"But I thought you were supposed to guard the engine room."

"What gude the engine room if the bridge was lost? Lynch, without a weapon, comes runnin' up and says: 'Out with ye on the deck. Take 'em from the rear. Come on.' He rushed ahead, and I had to follow."

By this time they had entered the saloon—which was a sight. Two pirates lay bleeding on the floor. A quartermaster and the third engineer were groaning on a couch, while Mrs. Warrington and the Hindu woman were clumsily trying to bandage them. Florence emerged from a cabin where the skipper had been carried.

"John!" she cried joyously, then stopped in confusion.

"Safe and sound," he assured her. "But we've got to play the game."

"I know. The captain wants to see you."

"Is he badly hurt?"

"I've stopped the bleeding. I must attend to these poor men. Mother doesn't know how." She rushed away, while the chief officer entered the stateroom where they had carried the skipper.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

CAPTAIN GOODWIN, lying on the bunk, was conscious but very weak, and he grinned triumphantly when his first officer entered.

"We beat 'em," he said; "but they almost did for me. I thought you were a cooked goose, and I didn't know who would take the ship in. Yates and Krebbs were done in, poor chaps. I won't be much good."

"I thank Heaven you're alive!" exclaimed Williams. "My Lord, captain, but this is terrible!"

"The girl fixed me up, and I'll pull through. Get busy and clear up the mess. Put the lascars to work; it's about time the beggars were some use. It's up to you to get us to Colombo."

"Aye, sir."

In a short time the brown men were all over the ship, carrying the wounded into the tiny hospital. All the white men were suffering from cuts, one or two with slight bullet wounds; and John found Florence tending Lynch, who was unconscious and dangerously wounded.

She looked up when the chief officer entered; the stowaway had been placed in Mrs. Warrington's cabin.

"Poor Cecil did his bit," Florence said sadly. "Mr. Duncan told me he was responsible for the rush from the engine room which saved us. The poor boy was unarmed. We found him lying near the ladder on the main deck."

"Good heavens!" John cried. "The Yankee mate got him! He fell over us where we were struggling in the dark, and the mate drove a knife into him. I knew he got somebody, but I didn't think of the stowaway."

"Did you recover the jewels?" she asked.

"By Jove, I forgot all about the cursed things," he replied. "They must be on one of the pirates, and by this time they may have changed hands again."

He dashed out on deck. The deck lights were burning now.

"Look sharp," he commanded the se-rang. "Fetch in any of these rascals who are not dead. We'll try to save them for the hangman. I'll have a look at that mate."

He descended to the main deck, and found the Yankee anything but dead, for he had suffered no wound except a blow in the head which had cracked his skull, perhaps, and he was now crawling slowly aft.

"Just a minute, my laddybuck," directed the chief officer. "Where do you think you're going?"

"Overboard, damn you! Do you suppose I want to hang?"

"I'll thank you to hand over that jewel belt," John said, grasping the man by the collar as he tried to get upon his feet.

"What makes you think I've got it?"

"You were running the show. Pass it over."

The man made a grimace; he was too weak to fight, and motioned to his trousers pocket, whereupon Williams thrust in his right hand and drew forth the yellow silk belt. Then he hustled the man, perhaps too roughly, considering his condition, up the ladder and down from the saloon deck into the brig, where he turned on the light and shoved the fellow upon the cot.

"How did you get them?" he demanded.

"Well, it was like this: The negro is a French Colonial, and he heard Captain Sousa telling this stowaway that the Hindu had a fortune around his waist. They were talking French, see, and they were planning to knock the brown man on the head and swipe them. The negro tells me, and I decided to take a hand in the game, so when you locked us in the stern deck house, I set the boys to work to take the frame out of that port-hole. I thought we could all get out, but it was too small for anybody 'cept one of the Malays. I told him to croak the Hindu and bring me the stuff; he's a good boy, that feller. I s'pose he's dead."

"I think so."

"Well he gets out, and then he finds the Portuguese was killed. I knew then why you visited us about midnight."

"Didn't he kill the Portuguese?"

"How could he? He wasn't out then."

"Then who killed him?"

"Damned if I know. I would 'a' done it myself if I was loose. So the negro just goes on and finds out where the Hindu slept, and chokes him to death. He came back and handed in the belt through the window. Of course, we had to be turned loose and take the ship to get away with the jewels, so I told him to try to get some guns and kill the guards and let us out. But he was gone so long, I thought you must have caught him."

"You've admitted a lot—enough to hang you ten times over."

"Oh, hell, I'm goin' to be hanged anyway. Say, can you do something 'bout my head? It's splitting."

"I'm no doctor, but I'll bring down some stuff, and bandage it."

"Well, it's all in the day's work," sighed the queer criminal. "We almost cleaned you out, at that."

"You sure did," grinned John. "If the engineer hadn't hit you over the head, you'd have finished me."

After locking him in, Williams climbed the stairs slowly. By a process of elimination it looked as though the murderer of Sousa was Florence's husband, and he hated to consider it, after the daring the man had displayed in the battle. The American said that his negro had overheard Lynch talking French to the Portuguese; yet the stowaway had claimed he could not talk to the man.

Well, it seemed as though the stowaway had got his; there had been a look on the man's face as he lay in bed which presaged death. Florence would be free, and he, John, would not. In the meantime, he must get the ship back on her course, and remain on the bridge continuously until they dropped anchor in Colombo harbor.

In the saloon, Florence, tears streaming down her face, was awaiting him.

"I think Cecil is dying," she said. "He wants to speak to you."

"Oh, I hope we'll pull him through."

"I don't think we can."

HE followed her uncomfortably into the stateroom, where he found the man watching the door. A strange change had come over Lynch.

"Ask her to go out," pleaded the man.

Florence heard him, and stepped out of the little room.

"I'm going to die, Mr. Chief Officer," said the stowaway. "I just wanted to tell you with my last breath that I didn't kill the Portuguese, though I did conspire with him to get those jewels."

"Do you know who killed him?" asked Williams.

"Yes, it was the Hindu," was his astonishing reply. "I saw his turban moving away from the body a few seconds before Duncan came out of the engine-room companionway."

"But," gasped Williams, "why should he slay the Portuguese?"

"I suppose he knew the fellow intended to rob him. I'm a rotter, but I wanted money like hell. I might have gone after the Hindu, but you clapped me under arrest. Florence told me that you know I'm her husband."

"Yes."

"Well, she's a fine woman, and I gave her a dirty deal. I'm glad for her sake I'm passing out. When those dogs rushed the bridge house, I remembered I used to be a white man, and I joined my own kind of people; that's why I got knifed."

"I think you saved my life."

"It wasn't intentional," said the stowaway, with a wan grin. "Did you recover the jewels?"

"Yes."

"Well, they caused a lot of bloodshed. That's all I have to tell you. You're a decent sort. Do you love Florence?"

"I'm engaged to be married."

"Too bad. She'll make out all right, though, now that she's going to be rid of me. Will you shake hands?"

Williams offered his right hand silently.

"That's good," said the stowaway. "I'm glad I ended decently. Good-by."

Three hours later he was dead.

The toll of the battle was appalling. Two officers were dead, the skipper wounded, two of the seamen killed, two others suffering from severe wounds, and of the pirates, one had gone over the side, the bodies of three were found lying where they had fallen, and three, badly wounded, were carried into the stern deck house, while the leader lay in the brig.

John would not permit Florence or her mother to touch the wounded beasts, but Duncan bandaged them as well as he could; as he said, they were going to be hanged, anyway.

The steamer had drifted for many hours, but, after the casualties had been taken care of, the ship was put back on her course, and the acting captain took the bridge, where he must remain without relief until he dropped anchor at Colombo.

In the morning there was an affecting funeral service; the engines were stopped while the survivors slid the bodies into the sea, and Mrs. Warrington recited prayers; then they drove on toward port.

Even when at anchor, John could not seek his bunk, for the police authorities came out on a tug, having been warned by radio of the slaughter on the ship, and he was closeted for two hours with the chief of police of the city. Captain Goodwin was progressing favorably, but he was sleeping, and his nurse, Florence, would not permit him to be disturbed by the investigators.

"It's a very thrilling story," said the inspector, when John had finished his recital; "but I have something to add to it. This Sir Ramdar Mogne was not a titled man, but a jeweler of Colombo; and the gems you have turned over to me were the property of the Maharajah of Calore, which had been intrusted to him for resetting. There is a reward of five thousand pounds for their recovery, Mr. Williams, and I shall recommend that it be paid to you. Their value is close to half a million pounds. Have you looked at them?"

"I haven't had time," admitted the navigator.

"One ruby alone is worth a hundred thousand pounds. It is the celebrated Calore ruby, third largest in the world. The young woman is not a princess at all. She is the wife of Ramdar Mogne. I can quite credit the man's murdering the Portuguese captain, if he was aware that the latter knew of the jewels."

"This is rather overpowering," stammered John. "I don't think the reward belongs to me. Captain Goodwin commanded the ship and was unfortunately wounded; it should go to him."

"You, personally, secured the gems from the mate of the *Sao Paolo*, and turned them over to the authorities. However, divide the reward, if you like. It's a very large sum."

"If I get it, I'll share it with those who defended the ship."

"As you like, sir. Now I suggest you get a bit of sleep. I'll give you a receipt for the gems, and take myself off."

AS chief officer of the *Cannonmore*, John Williams got twelve pounds per month, out of which he had saved three or four hundred pounds. Even if his share of the reward amounted to two

thousand pounds, it would be a fortune, enough for him to marry and establish his wife in comfort in a cottage in Kent or Surrey. He and Claire could be wed as soon as he returned to England; and perhaps his conduct in the last few days would induce the Cannon Line owners to give him a ship.

Although he had once looked forward to the day when he could lead his English girl to the altar, the prospect, now, was no longer joyful. How could he promise to love her all his life when he was madly in love with the beautiful American girl? And now Florence was no longer bound by marital ties to a worthless husband. He almost hoped that he would not receive the reward.

After six hours' sleep he rose, dressed in his best, and went ashore with the ship's papers to visit the agent and to ask for officers and seamen to help navigate the *Cannonmore* for the remainder of her journey. A physician had already boarded the ship to attend to the wounds of the victims, and he reported that all would recover. Captain Goodwin would have to be taken to a hospital ashore, and it might be weeks before he was upon his feet.

The Colombo agents of the Cannon Line received the acting captain with great enthusiasm, and congratulated him warmly upon the feat of bringing the ship in safely, with all other officers dead or wounded.

"I suppose you will want to retire and set up as a gentleman of the country, with the reward of five thousand pounds," said Mr. Heath, the head of the firm.

"The reward belongs to Captain Goodwin," John replied, "provided it is decided to pay it to the ship, at all."

"It will be paid without doubt. The maharajah has started for Colombo; he wires that he wishes to thank you in person for the recovery of his crown jewels. By the way, Mr. Williams, I have a letter here for you. It has been in my hands a month."

He handed over a small envelope. John recognized the writer from the address, and opened it, almost mechanically. What he saw—— But read it:

MY DEAR OLD JOHN: I have been waiting for you for more than three years, and our future, even now, is not rosy. Therefore, I have considered it my duty to my parents and myself to accept an advantageous offer of marriage from a Mr. Arthur Waring of London, whom, I believe, you have never met. I hope it will not hurt you too much; but you must admit it may be another ten years before you get your ship. Don't take it too hard, old boy, and my best wishes for your happiness.

Yours,

CLAIRE.

"Will you lunch with me?" Mr. Heath was asking.

"If you'll pardon me, I must return to the ship at once."

It seemed to him, as he was rowed out to the *Cannonmore*, that the oarlocks were clicking—"Florence, Florence, Florence."

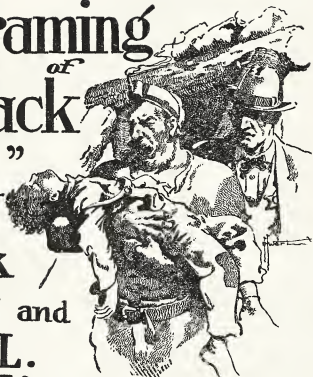
She was free, he was free, they had admitted their love for each other. Fate had broken the shackles of each; and his share of the reward made their early marriage possible. He found himself moving in time to the movement of the rowers, who did not go half fast enough.

Since the death of the stowaway, duty had chained him to the bridge; and Florence had remained in the cabin, attending to the wounded. They had not exchanged a word; but he knew that he would have been unfaithful to his promise to the girl in England, if he had been alone with the American girl for a moment. Now he was his own man by no act of disloyalty on his part. What a gorgeous morning it was, to be sure!

When Captain Goodwin was informed of the reward, he refused a share, at first, but finally agreed to accept fifty per cent, which he would divide with Duncan and the families of Krebs and Yates. Out of his two thousand five hundred pounds, John paid a hundred pounds each to the seamen and engineers who had been loyal, and there remained plenty of money to establish Mr. and Mrs. John Williams in comfort. And in less than six months after they were married, the owners of the Cannon Line transferred Captain Goodwin to the new *Cannonmore*, and promoted John Williams to the command of his old ship.

The Framing of "Black Dan"

By
**Patrick
Casey and
John L.
Considine**



Authors of "The Battle of Fort Newlin," "Holdouts and a Holdup," Etc.

"Black Dan" was something of a hell raiser, but he was regular, which was more than could be said for those who wanted to string him up.

RUFF" HARDY, duly appointed deputy sheriff at Weepah, awoke one morning to find that Nevada's newest boom town also had a justice of the peace. He had not been elected to the office—the camp was of too recent establishment, and too engrossed with locating prospective gold claims to be bothered with voting, either by ballot, upraised hands, or *viva voce*.

No, he had arrived with the rush three days prior and attached a shingle to his tent: "Jere Brusie, Attorney at Law." No clients calling, he had spent the following day in a survey of the place, and on this third morning, he had altered his sign to read: "Jere Brusie, Justice of the Peace." And Weepah unanimously agreeing he was all of that, immediately

took to calling him "judge," and proceeded to submit to his decision not alone problems that ordinarily go before a peace justice, but also matters of police jurisdiction and questions in equity reserved in older localities to higher courts.

In a community where every one expected to mushroom into a millionaire overnight, the adjudication of legal tangles was, naturally, the least of Judge Brusie's worries. Getting his fees, and large ones at that, was what most concerned him. If the defendant in an action had no money, his honor quickly proved his dexterity and lack of conscience by assessing the complainant.

This worked a double hardship where, for instance, the prospector whose flivver had been stolen was mulcted of one hun-

dred dollars for costs of court, when the judge learned the thief had fled to parts unknown. The "desert rat" lost both flivver and money and usually sent up a mighty howl, but found Weepah philosophic.

"You can't please everybody," Weepah agreed. "We've gotta have some form of law and order, and Jedge Brusie's gotta git paid for upholding the forms. No one else would waste time from locating."

Deputy Sheriff Hardy discovered that the presence of the pretender in office did help to maintain a semblance of order and, as well, served to lighten his own official burdens. These burdens had become quite onerous. If a man died from drinking moonshine, or a woman came to camp in search of a truant husband or a dance-hall position, or the vernal equinox brought glacial winds that blew over stovepipes and uprooted tents, or a cloudburst washed down the Monte Cristo hills and threatened to pollute the water supply at Barrel Springs, the first cry was: "Where's Hardy?" No matter how delicate the mission, how abstruse the problem, how foreign to the duties of his irksome office was the task, Ruff Hardy was the Poo-Bah to do the job without thought of remuneration.

Not that he couldn't afford it. He was one of the four lessees of the Jefferson Mine, from which two thousand dollars in gold was being taken daily. But twice in as many weeks had he driven to Goldfield, the county seat, in effort to resign the office that he had accepted, merely to have the sanction of the law in his ousting of the two Newlin brothers from the Jefferson, which they had illegally squatted upon or, to use the vernacular, jumped.

Each time Sheriff Mercereau had been away and Hardy had returned frustrated, as he felt that to that kindly official alone could he adequately express his reasons for wanting to relinquish his star. Mercereau had appointed Hardy at the request of Raeburn, one of the two aggrieved owners of the Jefferson; and it would look shabby, Ruff thought, to attempt to quit him with a polite but formal letter, without a heart-to-heart talk.

AS the deputy entered Brusie's tent this morning, he found one of the Newlin brothers, the little hunchback, Ben, and Frank Allender talking to Brusie, their three heads close together. Hardy knew the older Newlin for a crafty rogue, but of Allender he had formed a good opinion. He was a big, rough, uncouth fellow, as ready with a blow as a word, but withal generous and honest, and enjoyed, among the better citizens, a strong influence.

"Sheriff," was Brusie's greeting, as Hardy approached his desk, "these two gentlemen make complaint of a breach of the peace. One Daniel Dickenson, better known under the alias of 'Black Dan,' shot up the Big Strike Palace last night and with malice aforethought endangered the lives of the bystanders. Here is a warrant directing you to bring before this court forthwith the body of the aforesaid Daniel Dickenson, alias Black Dan."

"Dead or alive?" inquired Hardy. His tone was grave, but his eyes held the twinkle that always was evoked by the pseudo judge's pomposities.

"Alive, of course!" replied Brusie, considerably astonished. "I can't collect fees from a dead man. And we've gotta fine Dickenson to show him what's what in this man's town."

The two others nodded in corroboration.

"Your directions to bring his body misled me," apologized Hardy.

"Why, sheriff, you must know those words are merely a little matter of legal phraseology. Still, we gentlemen of the bench," he added grandly, "can't expect everything of the police arm."

"My ignorance, surely, judge. I haven't had much experience with legal forms, you know. But I'll go after Black Dan right away. Do you know if he's still in Weepah, or where I might find him?"

"He flivvered out of town at fifty miles an hour—which is another offense for which we'll have to tax him. Mr. Allender, here, says he saw him, about dawn, in the vicinity of his home, which is over to the west, you know, on a lower flank of the Silver Peak Range. He's got some sort of a claim or hole in the ground,

thereabouts"—the judge cast a peculiar look at Ben Newlin—"which he calls the 'Jimmy Darrough,' after the original discoverer of Weepah, forgotten these twenty-five years. But one moment, sheriff"—as Hardy started to leave—"I feel I must warn you that this Black Dan Dickenson is a dangerous character."

"Who says so?" Hardy turned back to inquire.

"Mr. Allender, here."

"No, I never," protested Allender, in a slow, rumbling bass. "All I know about the man is that he's got an old mine over near my shack, and that my youngest son seems to think he's every bit of all right." He grinned. "It was Ben Newlin said he was a hard formation."

"Well," drawled Hardy, "all I can reply is that, as a mining man and employer of real tough gunmen, Mr. Newlin ought to be a good judge of hard formations."

"That was a hot one," rumbled Allender, after they had made sure Hardy was out of earshot, "coming as it did, Ben, from the duck that ran your gunmen off the Monte Cristos and took the Jefferson Mine away from you."

"Oh, I'm not done with him yet," retorted the hunchback. "The man don't step in shoe leather that can monkey with Ben and Curt Newlin and get away with it. Myself, I'd pack brush three miles up a mountain, three times a day and seven days a week, before I'd call quits with a snoozer like him."

"It seems to me," said the would-be jurist, "you're going some toward getting even by having him tangle horns with this maverick, Black Dan." And, behind Allender's broad back, he winked at Ben.

"There's more ways of killing a cat than drowning him in milk," replied Newlin cryptically.

IN his whitened, steaming car, Hardy speeded across the alkali desert toward the Silver Peak Mountains, whose serrated tops gleamed incongruously with perpetual snow, like a mirage conjured up by the heat. The crystalline air allowed a wide range of visibility, and he could descry, miles off, on the slope of a foothill, the shack of the Allenders and, some

distance above it, the black mouth of the tunnel of the old Jimmy Darrough Mine.

Reaching the base of the foothill, he got out of the car and began, afoot, the toilsome climb up the trail. He had passed the clapboarded, unpainted shack, its corrugated-iron roof glistening like silver in the sun, when he halted dead. Ahead, and below the trail, on a rocky outcrop near the tunnel portal, a man sat dangling a child on his knee, and crooning what any one with a not too critical ear for melody might call a lullaby. The little boy, garbed in blue overalls much too large, was plowing his fingers through the black whiskers of the man. And that man was Black Dan Dickenson!

Hardy sat down, as much in surprise as to get out of sight. The "bad man" would be excessively annoyed, he felt, at being detected in his present occupation. Particularly by a deputy sheriff come to arrest him for shooting up a saloon the night before!

Presently the lullaby ceased, and a heavy voice said:

"Now run along, you little tyke, back to your maw."

Hardy got afoot to see the lad streaking down the hill by a short cut, and Black Dan, bearded chin on hand, gazing after him as if to make certain he came to no harm before reaching the back door of the shack below.

"Well, Dan," said Hardy, coming down the declivity from the trail and pausing before the other, "I understand you've been shooting up the Big Strike Palace."

The man looked up slowly, a scowl accentuating the somber cast of his black-bearded face. He not only knew Hardy, but there was no mistaking that star on his coat lapel, shining as though incrustured with diamonds. He saw fit, however, to disregard the badge of authority.

"Can't a man take a few drinks and celebrate?" he wanted to know. "What of it, Hardy, if I did?"

"Nothing, except I'm here to serve Judge Brusie's warrant."

"Take me to jail!" Black Dan was astounded, no less, and his right hand moved, almost out of habit, toward the gun sticking from his belt.

"No, merely arrest you," said Hardy,

grinning. "You know there's no jail in Weepah."

Black Dan laughed, a short, unpleasant laugh.

"If you arrest me," he declared significantly, "you'll be the first that ever did, of the many that's tried."

"I'm here to arrest you," said Hardy with seriousness, "and you're coming with me."

Black Dan eyed the deputy appraisingly for upward of a minute. He noted that Hardy was also armed, with an automatic.

"Sheriff," he said then, "one of us will have to be killed if I refuse to accompany you. I don't want to kill you and I don't think you want to kill me. So I'll chase along with you because I respect you, but that self-app'nted, tinhorn 'jackass of the peace' had better look out before he gets fresh with Daniel Tompkins Dickenson!"

"To show you how I appreciate your way of taking it," said Hardy, "I'll bring you in by the back flap of the judge's tent."

"Suits me. When I go, I us'ally go the whole hog, but there's some kinds of notoriety I don't hanker after, Hardy. If you was seen taking me down the main pike of Weepah, I'd have to kill half a dozen tough citizens before night, just to show who's chief in this man's town."

FACING Judge Brusie, Black Dan's unwonted mildness seemed to persist, in spite of everything.

"Daniel Dickenson," said Brusie, gravely rubbing his rather long nose, "you are charged with carrying concealed weapons, discharging firearms within the city limits, driving your car in excess of the speed regulations, and generally disturbing the peace. Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"Well, jedge, barring my weepins is never concealed"—here he touched the butt of his revolver, sticking from his belt in plain view—"and that this ain't a city and hasn't got limits nor speed laws, I guess I'm your meat."

"Ha!" exclaimed Brusie elatedly. "So you admit disturbing the peace!"

"If shooting out the lights in the Big

Strike saloon is known as that, I reckon I'm plumb guilty, jedge."

"It is," purred Brusie, rubbing his nose with animation. "And I shall have to fine you, accordingly, one hundred dollars."

"Jedge," explained Black Dan, in strangely meek tone, "I haven't got a hundred cents in my clothes, but if you'll give me time to step down the street a ways, I could rustle up that money, easy."

"All right," agreed Brusie, pleased beyond measure at the docility of the dreaded Black Dan and the near prospect of one hundred dollars for himself. "I will give you half an hour to raise the money."

Black Dan nodded, turned on his heel and left the "courtroom." Hardy followed at a much slower gait. As he passed the round circus tent of the Big Strike Palace, a din within caused the deputy to glance over the swinging doors which had been hung at the entrance to show, unmistakably, the nature of the place. Black Dan was at the long bar, the center of a considerable crowd, hammering on the rough deal boards with the bottom of a heavy beer glass, half full of an amber-colored fluid that looked suspiciously like whisky.

Hardy shook his head as he passed on.

"I'm afraid Judge Brusie is in for a surprise," he told himself.

Judge Brusie was. When Black Dan returned, slightly staggering, a half hour later, Judge Brusie suspended hearing on an assault case and began complacently rubbing his long nose, as the bad man weaved his uncertain way toward the bench.

"Your honor," announced the culprit, his tones a trifle thick, "I've come to settle my fine."

"Very good of you I'm sure, Mr. Dickenson." His honor beamed. But the smile gave way to a look of fright as Black Dan seized him by the long nose and bumped his head against the tent post immediately behind. The bumping continued until Black Dan was weary and the judge's head was one round ache. He felt as though his nose had been tweaked off.

WHEN Hardy drove up to the Jimmy Darrough Mine, the next morning, he found Black Dan sitting, cold sober, on the rocky outcrop near the tunnel portal.

"I was watching the goats," explained Dan nonchalantly, pointing his hand toward half a dozen of the horned tribe capering on the hilltop above. "They've got the right notion. Life's all play and rubbish with them."

"Wise billies, eh, Dan?"

"Oh, no; not so wise. They do some fool tricks, sometimes. They're too curious for their own good health. See that tunnel?" He jerked his thumb toward the opening in the hillside a little above them. "About fifty yards in from the portal, old Jimmy Darrough dug a shaft about a hundred feet deep. I'll bet there are a dozen dead goats at the bottom of that shaft, lured there by curiosity, blinded by the dark and sent to kingdom come before they knew it."

"Isn't that the usual wind-up for every one that takes the goat's view of life?" inquired Hardy subtly.

"Let's change the subject before it gets personal. You ain't looking for me again, are you, Hardy?"

The deputy nodded.

"Well, don't let it get into a habit, sheriff," warned Dan. "My disposition is peevish, specially after I've been drinking. You've been a little lucky with me up to now, that's all. My natchally proud and restive spirit has been kinda tied down. I've been down in the mouth, in the heart, and on my luck. Tell me plain, what do you want?"

"You."

Black Dan made to reach for his gun, but Hardy caught his hand.

"Now don't do anything rash, Dan," he urged. "You're already in bad enough. I know as well as you that Brusie's only a straw judge, but there are some good men here who look up to his authority, and the beating you gave him has stirred up deep feeling. There is even talk of a vigilance committee, and we don't want anything like that in Weepah. If you will take your medicine, all feeling will die down. But once a vigilance committee gets into action, it may be exile or

hanging for you—you never can tell where they'll stop!"

Black Dan's hand went limp under Hardy's grasp.

"I guess you win, sheriff," he grinned. "There's a reason why I want to stick here in Weepah, otherwise I'd hit the grit." He nodded significantly toward the tunnel portal above. "There's a prospect that looks like the makings of the real thing. It's my one chance to get away from a life of rioting and desperate chances, for somehow me and hard work never did agree. So lead on, Hardy. I'm your bacon. Take me home."

Presently Black Dan stood before a judge whose head was so swathed in bandages that he was forced to regard the prisoner through one blackened eye, while with swollen lips he sentenced him to ten days' confinement. Ten years would have been nearer to Brusie's liking, but Hardy's warning against severity, and his own wholesome recollection of what Black Dan had done to him the day prior, tempered the pseudo-jurist's craving for vengeance.

"Hardy," said Black Dan, as the deputy led him up the hill to a growth of dwarf pines, there to be chained, as Weepah lacked a jail, "I sure don't like this none. Now, as soon as I get loose, I'll have to kill a round dozen tough hombres to prove who's chief in this boom town!"

It was early in May, but on the second night of Black Dan's confinement one of those summer snowstorms that sometimes visit the mountains swept down upon Weepah from the north. The howling gale aroused Hardy, who had retired early, and he lost no time about getting up the hill to Black Dan. His prisoner, thoroughly chilled, was shivering violently when Hardy finally released him.

The deputy took him to his tent where he made a roaring fire in the box stove; but Black Dan had contracted a heavy cold, which would have developed into pneumonia had not Hardy nursed him and kept him in his tent for the remainder of his jail term. They struck up, naturally, a strong friendship in those eight days.

ON the afternoon of the day Black Dan was released, a breathless messenger came running up to Hardy on the main street to tell him that he was wanted out in the Silver Peak district. A baby boy was lost, and all efforts to find him had proved unavailing. Hardy started off with the messenger to get his car, and before he had gone a dozen paces he was joined by Black Dan, who had not yet left town.

"I wonder if it's the kid in the blue overalls?" was the first thing Dan said.

"It sure is," said the messenger. "That's the way he was described—wearing blue jeans."

"I know where to look for him then," said Dan, as he jumped with Hardy into the latter's automobile. "He's fallen down the shaft in the Jimmy Darrough tunnel. I know, 'cause I caught him roaming around the portal the first time you came there, Hardy, to arrest me."

"I recall seeing him with you, Dan. But that shaft, I remember you said, is a hundred feet deep. There isn't a chance for him, if your guess is correct."

"Maybe so, maybe not, but I'm going down after him, dead or alive. Will you turn windlass for me, once we get there?"

"Sure, but the rope on that windlass is bound to be old, perhaps rotten. If it breaks, Dan, you'll be done for."

"I'm willing to take the chance, Ruff. That kid was quite a *compadre* of mine. If you won't turn, though, I'll have to scout up some one who will."

"We should have got a stout rope before we left town."

"Too late now. Can't turn back. Minutes are precious, Hardy. Give your old bus all the gas she can stand."

When they reached their objective, they plunged into the tunnel, and had gone about forty-five yards in the darkness when Black Dan, who was leading, put back his hand warningly.

"Easy, Ruff. We're getting near the shaft. Light a match."

Hardy did so, and not five feet ahead the mouth of the shaft could be discerned dimly. They stepped cautiously to the edge and, Hardy lighting another match, peered into the abyss. The match flame illumined but a few feet

of the depth. Black Dan raised his voice and yelled downward. Both men listened in anxious silence, but heard only echoes.

Hardy seized the windlass arm and began to turn in the dark.

"What are you doing, Ruff?"

"Raising the bucket."

"Oh, never mind that now. I'll shin down the rope," said Dan. "When you feel me give three tugs, then start to hoist."

Hardy, his eyes becoming accustomed to the darkness, saw Dan's black bulk disappear in the gloom of the shaft. Three tugs came peremptorily on the rope, a few minutes later, and Hardy began to turn the windlass. Presently he heard Black Dan's hail as the bucket came to the collar of the shaft. Even in the obscurity he could see that the prospector carried what looked like a bundle.

"Is he living?" asked the deputy.

"Don't know yet for sure. Got to get him out into the air." And Black Dan started swiftly for the portal of the tunnel.

"Poor little kid!" he exclaimed, as they burst into the light of day. For the lad in blue jeans hung limply over his arm, his face white, his eyes closed.

Hardy placed his hand over the child's heart and found it beating faintly.

"He's still living," he pronounced. "But it's a miracle, Dan. How did it happen? What saved him from getting smashed?"

"Goats," answered Black Dan simply.

"There was a mess of them at the bottom of the shaft. Gosh, how they smelled!" He shuddered at the recollection. Then, his attention attracted by the sound of voices, a look of alarm came into his eyes as he saw a group approaching up the hillside.

"Here," he said agitatedly, "you take the kid, Hardy. That woman bawling in the front of that crowd must be the mother."

"But what—why——" stammered Hardy.

"Take him!" insisted Black Dan fiercely. "I won't have any woman slobbering over me for saving her yunker. I won't, I tell you!" And he forcibly thrust the burden into Hardy's arms.

"Don't stand gawping," he admonished. "The lad needs a doctor, quick."

He swung on his heel, then veered round again to add:

"Don't tell 'em who did it, mind, Hardy. I'm asking you as a favor. Promise. I got a good reason."

"All right," assented Hardy, "but I'm danged——" The words died away in a mutter as he watched Black Dan disappear into the tunnel at a run.

Hardy found he had let himself in for an embarrassing experience, for he was kept busy denying that it was he who had rescued the child. When scoffers asked him to name who had, his promise to Black Dan locked his lips, and his inability to answer only confirmed the impression that modesty was what prompted his disclaimers. The more he protested, therefore, the less he was believed.

In such case, Weepah felt, there was but one thing to do—make a gift. A purse was quickly collected, the most expensive gold chronometer in town was bought, and a committee was selected to make the presentation. There was a mass meeting, with bonfires and speeches, and a banquet at which most of the leading citizens were present, after which the whole camp proceeded to make a night of it. And Hardy, on whom they had to "ride herd," as a former cowboy among them expressed it, to keep him from bolting, was forced to go through it all, looking much as might a sheep thief caught in the act.

As the weary revelers turned homeward in the morning, they met the doctor, who had been sitting all night at the bedside of the sick child. Upon his assurance that the little fellow would pull through, they retraced their steps and indulged in a second celebration. But Hardy by that time had fled to parts unknown and could not be found.

NOT all the prominent citizens of Weepah were at the blow-out. Big Curt Newlin, and his crafty, hunch-backed, older brother, with Hank Abbott and Tom Hilton sat through the evening in the back room of the Harem Café, discussing Ben Newlin's pet project—the formation of a vigilance committee.

Hilton and Abbott were minions of the Newlins—hired gunmen, witnesses in lawsuits, and handy men for other shady services. They did not often lift their voices against any Newlin plan, but on this occasion Abbott felt constrained to protest.

"I have seen these law-and-order movements before," he said, "and usually the fellows that started them couldn't keep them in hand. You'll get Black Dan at the start, maybe, but what's to stop the vigilantes from getting after us, before they're through?"

"Take a reef in your jaw," adjured little Ben Newlin boldly. "I tell you I'll own the whole affair, body, boots and breeches. Frank Allender will be the nominal head—that's decided—but that big bozo is so dumb he'll do whatever I tell him, every trip."

"As long as we keep our mouths shut," added Curt Newlin significantly, "we'll all be perfectly safe. We'll be members of the committee and not only have a say in all that's done, but also get info' long in advance about everything that's going to be pulled off."

"To make it a cinch on that score," ended Ben, "I'll get you, Abbott, elected secretary. We'll have to make Allender president, of course, on account of his standing in the camp, and also to cover up our own motives."

"If Frank Allender ever got wise you was after Black Dan's mine, the Jimmy Darrough, you wouldn't stand a chance of running Dan out of town," Abbott couldn't refrain from observing.

"The skeleton at the feast has spoken," sneered the hunchback, glancing craftily from one to the other about the table. "And how's Allender going to get wise? Who's going to wise him up? Nobody but us four are in the know, and should a hint ever drift to Allender of what I'm after, one of us four will find his wind-pipe slit—and it won't be either of the Newlin brothers, you can bet on that!"

"Just how are you going to get rid of Black Dan?" Hilton broke his silence in an effort to divert the conversation to less threatening topics.

"Order him out of town as a dissolute character, too hot for the place. Any-

body that shoots up saloons, bangs the legal magistrate's head, and so forth, like he's been doing, can easily be classed as 'not wanted.'

"He won't go," declared Abbott positively. "I know Black Dan Dickenson."

"So much the better, then," retorted Ben, with a smile. "I know Black Dan, myself, and maybe I kinder expect that."

Abbott studied his smiling face.

"You mean," he probed, "you'll retire him permanently? Even though he hasn't killed a man or done none of those stunts they usually string a man up for?"

The hunchback nodded emphatically.

"Well, maybe you can do it, but if you can, you're a bird," remarked the doubting one.

"Leave it to me, Abbott. I've got it all figured out, up here." He tapped his forehead.

"I hope you have," replied the other, "for I'd like to be sure there's no reverse English on this vigilante business, to carom back and hit me full on the nose."

"Aw, go chase yourself!" snapped Ben Newlin, with a show of anger. "You're a born cold-footer, Hank Abbott, and hell ain't hot enough to take the chill off. I'll give you the program, my boy, and make you like it! The vigilance committee will be all formed and functioning by sundown to-morrow."

ON Monday morning, as he was seated at breakfast in the Canary Cottage Restaurant, a boy handed Black Dan a yellow envelope. Thinking it a telegram, he hastily ripped it open and read:

We give you eight hours to leave town for keeps. After three o'clock this afternoon, you are here in this vicinity at your own peril. This means hanging. 601.

Black Dan reread the message slowly, without a change of color or tremor of a muscle, folded it with steady fingers and replaced it in its envelope.

"Ham and eggs, Eddie," he told the waiter, who stood before him, napkin on arm; "eggs turned over, hot cakes and coffee."

He ate his meal calmly, then rolled and lighted a cigarette, and sat, deep in meditation, until he had smoked it through.

Then, throwing the butt away, he arose languidly to his feet, yawned and stretched a bit—for he knew watchful eyes were upon him—and sauntered out in the direction of Hardy's tent.

But no one was there. The stove was cold and the bed looked as if it had not been slept in. Vaguely disappointed, Black Dan strolled back toward the main street. As he was passing the Harem Café, Tom Hilton caught up and walked along with him.

"Got your walking papers, eh, Dan?"

The other merely glared at him.

"Oh, I know all about it, you see, but I wouldn't worry, Dan, if I was you."

"Can it!" growled Dickenson. "Save your sympathy for those that need it. It takes more'n a scrap of paper from a passel of cowardly coyotes to make a hare out of me."

"That's the stuff, Dan, that's the way to talk. Don't let 'em shoo you off like you was a chicken. Me, I just wanted to tell you it's all a bluff on Ben Newlin's part. He thinks he'll scare you out of Weepah on a four-flush. Stand pat, Dan!"

Dan's head went up with a jerk at the hated name of Newlin; his mouth tightened.

"I know Ben Newlin and I know you, too, Tom Hilton, and you can tell that scoundrel boss of yours that any time he wants to get me, he can come and try it. Just let him try it, that's all!" And he walked away with angry step, his hands stuck stiffly into his coat pockets.

Hilton, chuckling, turned back into the Harem Café. There, in the back room, he found Ben Newlin, playing solitaire.

"The mutt fell for it," he told his boss. "He's got his neck arched, and you couldn't drive him out of town, now, with a cannon."

"Good!" approved the hunchback. "I thought it would work. Now all we have to do is to wait until after three o'clock and then put the screws on Frank Allender."

"But what tune are you going to sing to Allender?"

"Vigilantes' orders must be obeyed, or they might as well go out of business. Vigilantes' promises must be kept, or

they'll be the laughingstock of the town. That line. Get me?"

"I sure do. But Frank Allender is a tender-hearted mutt. Think it'll work?" Newlin laughed scornfully.

"I know it will work. I know Allender."

"You're sure a fine judge of human nature, Ben."

Something about the compliment, reminiscent of what Hardy had said, nettled Newlin.

"Oh, tie that bull outside," he said. "I don't care for taffy. And roll your hoop, Hilton. I want you to listen in on the street corners and find how the wind blows."

AT five minutes after three o'clock that afternoon, Black Dan strode ostentatiously down the main street of Weepah. He was conscious of black looks and disapproving nods from many, but he carried himself with bold assurance. Reaching the Big Strike Palace, in the heart of town, he entered and invited the tentful of patrons to drink with him.

None dared refuse, but the hesitancy in their acceptance gave him pause and made him thoughtful. He paid for the drinks and stood outside the place a moment as if undecided which way to go, then swung off in the direction of Hardy's quarters. While he remained in sight of the main-streeters, his step was jaunty and not too brisk, but once a sand dune had intervened to hide him, he increased his stride to a furious pace.

He had always played a lone hand, but since meeting Hardy, he had come to rely upon him, and now, in this crisis, he turned quite naturally to the deputy, as the friend in his need. But as luck would have it, Hardy was not in his tent.

Awaiting him there, however, was Rod Bendy, one of Ruff's three partners in the lease on the Jefferson. Bendy said he had just come in from the workings in the Monte Cristo hills, and didn't know where Hardy was. Certainly he was not out at the mine.

"Well, I wanted to see him," said Black Dan dejectedly, and paused, as if reluctant to say more. "I wanted to ask his advice," he added, and looked forlornly

along the trail that led to town. He gulped and ended: "The vigilantes have ordered me to leave Weepah!"

"No-o! Have they organized a committee? I didn't know a thing about it. When did you get your orders?"

"This morning."

"How much time did they allow you?"

"Till three this afternoon."

Bendy's eyebrows lifted. He shot back one cuff, looked at his watch, and gave vent to a low whistle.

"Why, it's nearly four now! I'm afraid you've made a mistake, Dan."

"Maybe I have," admitted Dan lugubriously. "I tried to see Hardy this morning. I'd have done anything he told me. Then I heard Ben Newlin was behind this, and I got my neck arched. So I stayed the limit, and past."

"Well, it might not be too late yet," said Bendy reassuringly, trying to make his tone sound convincing. "If you'd take my advice in the absence of Hardy, Dan, I'd go. That hunchback, Ben Newlin, is bad medicine. He'd think no more of getting you strung up than he would of killing a fly. That is, if he's got the slightest motive for it and he must have a——"

"I'll say he has!" interrupted Dan, with vehemence. "He's after my mine, the old Jimmy Darrough."

"You don't mean it!"

"It's true, though. The Newlins, both of 'em, are trying to take it away from me, claiming prior rights, but really relying on bribery and crooked work to gain their ends. There's a suit on about it—before Judge Brusie, of all persons—and I lose by default if I'm not here next Monday."

Bendy whistled again.

"Does Ruff Hardy know anything about this?"

"About the suit, yes, but I don't think he's been in town since the vigilance committee's been formed."

"Well, it's sure hard lines for you, Dan. Yet, it's better to lose your mine than your life. Hardy and the rest of us are working to kill the Newlins' influence here——"

"I know that."

"And we'll do it in time. Then you

can come back and fight to regain the Jimmy Darrough."

But Dan shook his head morosely.

"Too late. Once the Newlins get hold of that property, they'll gut it. Unless it's a whale, they'll clean it out so that by the time I get back there'll be nothing left but bones and feathers. Another thing, I believe it's too late for me to try to leave. They'll be after me before I can get a mile out of town."

"Perhaps you're right," admitted Bendy. "I'll tell you what you do! Hide out here in Hardy's tent—they'll never think to look for you in the quarters of the deputy sheriff—while I scout around town and see if I can find where Hardy's gone to."

"But suppose you can't find Hardy, or no word of him?"

"I've thought of that. I'll plant an auto behind this tent, once it gets dark, for you to escape in. But we can't do anything in that way till night comes to cover up our movements."

"Agreed," said Dan. "Your scheme sounds good. I'll look for that machine as soon as dusk falls."

"It'll be here, Dan," Bendy heartily assured him.

"Yet I wish Hardy was around," Dan called after him as he struck off toward town.

BENDY met Mart Gunning, another partner, in the main street.

"Where's Hardy?" he queried.

"Gone to Goldfield to try to resign his job," laughed Gunning. "He left here yesterday morning, Sunday, to escape the second jubilee. I was with him Saturday night, and the big doings sure fed him up with his job. He figured Sheriff Mercereau would be in Goldfield over Sunday."

"I hope he isn't, I hope Ruff remains deputy!" exclaimed Bendy, and he told the reason why. "I'm going after Hardy," he added. "You, Mart, plant a flivver behind Ruff's tent for Black Dan just as soon as it gets dark."

An hour later, before an inn on the road to Goldfield, Bendy saw Hardy's car and found the owner within, washing up, preparatory to eating dinner.

"Are you still deputy, Ruff?" Bendy asked breathlessly.

"Yep," replied Hardy, grinning. "Mercereau flatly refused my resignation."

"Fine!" ejaculated Bendy, and he quickly told Hardy about Black Dan.

"Supper's ready, sheriff," announced the landlord.

"I'm not eating," said Hardy, and he jumped into his car and was off.

Yet despite the speed at which he forced his automobile, darkness had fallen ere Hardy came within sight of the lights of Weepah. A wavering illumination as from the blaze of torches at one end of town told him that the lynchers were already forgathered, and he headed for there.

The mob parting in haste before his plowing wheels and the insistent honk of his horn, he drove straight up to the "trouble car" on which Black Dan was standing, a rope noosed loosely about his neck, the other end going over the derrick of the repair machine above. A man in the crowd drew a revolver and pointed it at Hardy, but before he could pull the trigger, another struck up his wrist.

"No you don't, Ben Newlin! Nobody can touch Sheriff Hardy while I'm here. He saved my boy."

Hardy recognized the slow rumbling bass as that of Frank Allender.

"No, Allender," he said, in a voice that could be heard at the remotest fringe of the hushed throng. "I'm not the man that saved your boy. He's up there"—pointing to the bearded fellow on the cart. "Black Dan Dickenson did that for you."

The silence deepened, following this revelation. The crackle of the blazing torches could be distinctly heard. Allender heaved his huge bulk up above the crowd.

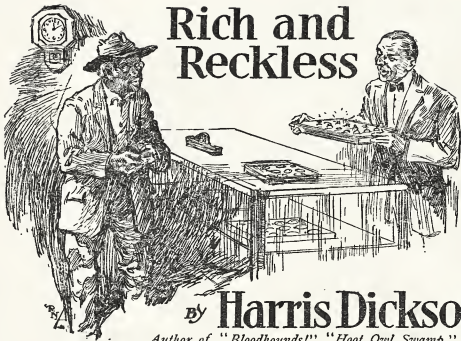
"Then by all that's holy," he exclaimed, putting his hand on Dan's shoulder, "the gazebo that touches this man dies."

A cheer broke from the throats of the mob. Only the Newlins and one or two of their henchmen muttered.

"All right, boys?" asked Allender.

"You bet!" roared a hundred voices.

And Allender lifted the noose from about Black Dan's neck.



Rich and Reckless

By **Harris Dickson**

Author of "Bloodhounds!" "Hoot Owl Swamp," Etc.

Old darky Zack, known—principally to himself—as "Old Reliable," was the hero of the hour, and he sure stepped out with the reward money he got from the bank.

HE seemed to be a mighty nice man, that soft-spoken stranger with whom Zack scraped acquaintance near the filling station. The dark-haired transient did not parade himself publicly in front of the station, but had retired to seclusion at the rear, on a vacant lot behind Mr. Ike Grunberg's Emporium, where clerks tossed empty boxes through the back door. That's where "Old Reliable" happened to run across him.

Everybody seemed to be acting agreeable that morning, for the whole county was bragging about Zack. Last night the people couldn't let Colonel Spottiswoode eat his supper, or read, or sleep. His telephone rang every minute with neighbors inquiring if it were true that Zack had recovered Mr. Baum's money that was stolen from the bank. Had Uncle Zack actually trained the bloodhounds that caught the robbers? Was it a fact that Sheriff Womack and the Memphis detective were just about to turn the prisoners loose for lack of evidence, when

Zack discovered proof that led to their confession? And did Mr. Baum intend to pay Zack a liberal slice of the reward?

It had tickled old Zack plumb down to his toes when he heard quality folks getting so excited about him, when he saw the colonel laughing and nodding as he answered, "Yes—yes—yes," over the phone; "yes, Zack did it."

Colonel Spottiswoode gave Zack all the credit; so did everybody else, when he arrived in town next morning for his two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar reward. People just naturally couldn't do enough for Zack; crowds swarmed around the post office, making him tell over and over how he happened to recognize the stolen two-dollar bill, and exactly where it was that he located Mr. Baum's money, which the smart detective from Memphis had been unable to find. The more Zack talked, the more things he had done, all by himself; and the less had anybody else accomplished. Of course, he admitted that the Memphis detective did his best, which wa'n't much. And Mr. Joe Dennis started

the bloodhounds. But dogs as well as men had acted under Zack's personal direction and control. He felt his way along, saw that nobody aimed to contradict him, then took the sky for the limit, and soared.

Country darkies hung around with gaping mouths, drinking in this wine of greatness. Some of the white gentlemen smiled, and gave Zack cigars; his pockets bulged with them. He smoked only one at a time. And every so often an amused planter winked; then Old Reliable followed him to a rear room, and got a drink which further lubricated his tongue. Under this oil of joy his story strengthened. The reward grew bigger and bigger. He felt rich, very, very rich. Nothing so adds to wealth as a swig of corn liquor. It swells the swigger's bank account. An exuberant inflation causes money to multiply faster than rabbits, doubling twice per minute. After his third toddy, Zack became gloriously affluent, buzzing about the streets of Delta City like one of those little black bugs that waltz around a mud puddle.

WHILE in these expansive spirits, Zack saw the stranger. He was hustling back toward the filling-station corner, with Colonel Spottiswoode's hat clamped tight on his head, the sweatband wadded with paper to make it fit.

"Come here, old man," the stranger beckoned, with a most attractive smile.

"Yas, suh. Comin', suh."

At once Zack spotted him for a new-comer. Maybe he hadn't heard the news. So Zack stopped to tell him; but the stranger started first:

"You are the man who captured those bank robbers?"

"I'm him."

"What's your name?"

"Zack Foster, suh. But ev'ybody, white an' black, calls me 'Ole Reliable.'"

"Ole Reliable." Funny little wrinkles began twitching around the stranger's mouth, although he never stopped tinkering with a hammer on his mud-splashed touring car. A friendly white man, a Southerner, as Zack well knew from his easy ways. "So then call you 'Ole Reliable?'"

"Yas, suh." The negro beamed. "'Cause folks claims I don't never promise nothin' what I don't do. Dat's me."

"Noble reputation."

"Sholy, suh. Sholy. All de big-bug white folks recommends me pow'ful high." From the tail of a thirstily expectant eye, Zack was sizing up this stranger. Tourists who streaked through Delta City, or tarried to buy gas, were usually divided into two classes. One sort would nudge a colored citizen in his confidential ribs and whisper: "Can you get me something to drink?" The other class, far the better kind, toted a few quarts of their own, and sometimes let Zack sample it behind the garage. This particular tourist was not so easy to figure out. His license plate showed "Tex.," but Zack didn't know that "Tex." stood for "Texas," any more than he could have suspected that "A. D." meant "Anno Domini." So he avoided committing himself, and waited for a cue.

Soon the white man stopped working on his car, and asked in a low voice:

"You know the people around here?"

"Who? Me? I reckon I knows ev'ybody, from de cunnel hisself, to dem lit-tlest fleas on Bill Jiggit's baby pup."

"Then," the stranger decided promptly, "you are the very man I'm looking for. I need help."

"Help? Yas, suh." At this threat Zack began edging away. When an autoist hollers for help, it means that he wants some darcy to change his tire under a broiling sun, while he sits in the shade and smokes. But with all the money that Zack had waiting for him at Baum's Bank, he didn't hanker for any such job. Therefore, he mobilized for immediate departure, glancing behind to make sure that no cabbage crate obstructed his exit.

"'Scuse me, suh. I'm hurryin' to de bank."

"Wait a minute. I want to consult with you."

"Sult wid me?"

"Yes. Privately."

There seemed a peculiar fascination about this stranger's manner, a charm in his tone, something seductive in the clandestine squint with which he peered about

him, searching for a safe place. Zack loved a mystery, so, half hanging back like a calf dragged against his will, he followed that tourist among a chaos of packing cases, where nobody could spy upon them from the street. There his conductor whirled and announced:

"I never pick the wrong man."

"Suttinly, suh. Suttinly."

"This morning, when I observed how popular you were, I said to myself: 'There's a valuable man to help me.'"

"Run yo' taxicab, suh? I loves to drive?"

"Not that. Not that." For a while the stranger stood drumming with lean, scaly fingers on a dry-goods box. A stubble of black beard covered his face, but failed to conceal the lines of exposure and anxiety. After a silent meditation, he spoke so unexpectedly that it scared Zack.

"Old Reliable, can you keep your mouth shut?"

"Mouf shut? Who? Me?" The negro clamped his lips tighter than a bear trap. His brow furrowed with such reticent corrugations that the stranger nodded approvingly, and said:

"I must be careful to keep people from guessing who I am. See my car? Looks old, don't it?"

"Sholy do."

"She's brand-new. Finest that money can buy."

"Say she is?"

"Why do I keep her all splashed with mud? Why do I let my beard grow, and wear old clothes?" The stranger winked craftily. "Because I want people to think that I'm one of these poor tourists."

"Sholy, suh. I used to be po' my own self."

"Sh! Sh! I can trust you. My name is Rockefeller. John D.'s nephew."

"*Jee-rusalam!*"

"Of course, you understand that if any of our family hits a hick town, and tries to buy something, these rubes charge him ten times what it's worth."

"Sho do. Six bits for a glass o' sody pop."

"That's why I want you to buy some property for me. No sense in your staying poor."

"I used to be po'," Zack repeated, fearing that Mr. Rockefeller hadn't heard him the first time.

"This deal will make you rich. I'll point out the property and let you handle our trade. Just step in my car."

"Step in yo' car? Now? Right now?"

"Yes. Do it now."

IT was drawing near to nine o'clock, and Zack couldn't risk being a minute late when Mr. Baum opened his financial doors. But the stranger talked so briskly that he got little chance to express himself.

"Mister! Mister! Dey's waitin' to pay me some money at de bank."

"What? Haven't you collected your reward?"

"Not yit— Oh! I knows what to do." A luminous idea struck old Zack, and he planted one foot on the running board as he suggested: "Me an' you kin drap by de bank in yo' car. I aims to draw three or fo' hundred dis mornin', fer pocket change."

"You have no money?"

"Nary nickel."

This gave the crook a jolt. From hearing Zack's boastful proclamations on the street, Dan Niblock, alias Rockefeller, supposed the negro to have considerable cash in his jeans, and cautious inquiries confirmed the statements of a reward. So Dan had almost fallen into the error of carrying off a prospect who didn't possess a cent. It was now Dan's turn to pause and consider.

"Hold on." He pulled Zack out of his car. "Wait. It would be foolish of me to show myself at the bank. Don't you think the president might recognize me as Mr. Rockefeller?"

Narrowly, Zack inspected his new friend, up and down, then replied:

"He mought. *I'd* know you anywhere, sence I gits a good look at yo'."

"Think so? Then we mustn't be seen together. Go and collect your reward. Hurry back, and step in my car when nobody's looking. Take the rear seat, and don't let people see you."

"Don't let people see me?" Zack protested. "What's de sense o' ridin' onless folks sees you?"

"We've got to fool the people," Mr. Rockefeller insisted. "How long will it take you to get back?"

"Fool de people? Yas, suh. I'm mighty nigh back right now."

"Good! If you meet me on the street, don't bat an eye. Remember we are strangers."

"Yas, suh." Zack grinned. "I gits dat. You don't need to put me wise wid a club."

Carrying a face of inscrutable secrecy, old Zack hustled around the filling-station corner, where a wind caught him, and Colonel Spottiswoode's cast-off breeches flapped about his skimpy shanks. He had scarcely disappeared when a head stuck up from its hiding place among the jungle of packing boxes. A bright-red head.

"Dan," "Pinkey" questioned hoarsely, "did you get some money out of him?"

"No. He hasn't collected it yet. But I'm goin' to get it."

"Goin' to get it," the redhead sneered. "That's what you say every day—what you're *goin'* to do."

"See here, Pinkey," Dan said quietly, with decision. "We're in one hell of a jam, and quarrelin' makes it worse. I wouldn't let that darky go if he had money. He's gone to the bank for his reward."

"He won't come back," Pinkey whined. Pinkey seemed hopeless and sullen, ready to quit. But the other nerved him up.

"Listen, Pinkey. That's a hangin' matter behind us."

"Don't I know it?"

"We are bound to get on, somehow. And we can't run without gasoline. Can't eat without money. Follow that darky to the bank."

"I'm scared."

"You *must*." Dan yanked Pinkey out from his packing case, and gave him a shove. "After he draws his money, if he stops anywhere, come and tell me. I'll go *get* him."

"But, Dan," Pinkey persisted, "I'd rather drop our car and take our chances in the woods. Or wait for night, then hold up somebody."

"Not me," the sturdier bandit an-

swered. "Twenty dollars out of that darky will pay our fare to Memphis."

"But, Dan, I hate to stay by that car another minute. It's been traced, and maybe—"

"We've got to risk something. Go along and watch that darky. When he comes here with the money, you hurry to the place we selected. I'll run him out in the car."

"You can't run nowhere without gas."

Pinkey objected to every proposition, until Dan became annoyed.

"Do what I tell you!"

"All right." And the red-headed fugitive started off, grumbling.

When his pal had gone, Dan produced a wallet from his pocket—a flabby, empty wallet which he proceeded to stuff to fatness with an old newspaper.

"I've got to try," he muttered. "*Got to do*." Then, as a further argument, in case he failed to persuade old Zack peaceably, Dan laid a heavy hammer on the front seat.

BY nimble dodging and twisting, by the use of football tactics, by jerking loose from admirers who grabbed his coat tails and sought to detain him, the county's most popular citizen worked his way along Main Street. At the next corner stood Baum's Bank, and Mungo Baum himself was just stepping across from the post office.

"Hello, Zack," the rotund banker greeted him. "Coming for your reward?"

"Yas, suh. Hopes you slep' well last night, suh."

"Better than for many a night."

"Glad o' dat, suh. Proud o' dat. You was lookin' peaked from all dat worryment befo' I found yo' money, suh."

"Sixty-four thousand is enough to make any man lose sleep. Now, Zack"—the banker halted outside—"just a minute, between friends. I want you to take some stock in my bank."

"Stock? In yo' bank?" Zack peeped through the plate-glass window at a neat little lobby with immaculate white tiles on its floor, and a pretty rug in one corner, beside the president's desk. "Lordy, Mister Baum, I wouldn't take no stock in dere. Dey'll mess it all up."

"No. No, Zack." As a conservative business man, Mr. Baum did not smile. His most valued customer, Colonel Spottiswoode, had urged that he induce the negro to accept bank stock instead of cash that would be frittered away. So the banker merely corrected Zack's financial misapprehension: "That's not my proposal. I want you to *buy* some stock."

"Not me. I'm pestered aplenty wid what de cunnel's got. Dem mules o' hisn all de time bustin' in our garden, an' I got to chase 'em out."

At this stupidity Mr. Baum showed the faintest sign of irritation, and led Zack inside to explain. So, when Pinky passed and glanced casually through the bank window, he saw the president seated at his desk in front, with Old Reliable in the opposite chair. Baum was leaning forward and tapping the negro's knee.

"I mean for you to purchase stock in this bank, say two hundred dollars. Thereby you become a partner, and——"

"Pardner?" A smile like a brilliant sunrise glorified Zack's countenance. "Pardner? Den I'll set my chair in here. Side an' side wid yourn. An' when darkies comes to borry money, I'll rare back, same as you, an' tell 'em: 'You can't git nary cent.' Yas, suh. Yas, suh. I'll do dat." Words gushed from Zack in such a resistless flood that Baum could not stem them. "When does I begin, Mister Baum? I'll fetch my chair right now. Alec Watson's on his way to borry twenty dollars. Lemme handle him. Lemme handle him."

While Zack was rolling up both sleeves to handle Alec Watson, Baum spoke a few concise words, which quenched the fire of enthusiasm in the negro's eyes.

"Shucks! Den I can't set here an' pour Alec back in de jug?"

"No. I shall attend to all loans."

"Well, Mister Baum, I reckon I mought as well take my money."

"But, Zack, Colonel Spottiswoode thinks——"

"Yas, suh. I knows what he thinks. Huh! Cunnel ain't 'quainted wid my business."

To an utterly deaf old negro Baum presented every economic argument that

he knew, while Zack demolished each reason with the same reply: "I don't want nothin' 'cept de money."

"Then, give it to him, Joe," Baum called angrily to his teller. "He'll spend it for peanuts."

"Thankee, suh. Thankee, suh." Zack began to smile again; for a time it appeared like the white folks were fixing to outtalk him.

"How'll you have it?" the teller directed at Zack's grinning face.

"Money, suh, Mister Joe. Jest money."

"Tens? Twenties? Fives?"

"Mix it up, please, suh. All kinds o' money. Wid a heap o' silver what'll kingle when I walks."

Amused as he was, Joe Dennis stood behind his bars like a mummy, counting out half dollars, quarters, nickels, dimes, and asked:

"Uncle Zack, are your pockets strong?"

"Money ain't never busted 'em yit."

IT lacerated the feelings of Mungo Baum to see Old Reliable go shuffling out, holding a breeches pocket that was stuffed so full of coin that it never made a single clink.

"Old fool! Won't have a nickel in twenty minutes."

"Less 'n twenty minutes," Joe Dennis chuckled, and went on with his work.

But it did not distress red-headed Pinky to see Zack reach the street with so much cash, and start toward the lot where Dan was laying for him. Having nineteen minutes yet to his credit, Old Reliable approached the jewelry store. Many and many a time, when he was poor, Zack had stood in front of Levi's brilliant window, licking his lips, and choosing what he'd grab if the glass happened to break. Being rich, he needn't hang around the outside; and Levi Marx saw that he did not. For Levi ambushed him at the door, and drew Zack in by flaunting a necklace of rhinestones before his eyes. Pinky's victim vanished so quickly that the red-headed crook gave a gasp, and started running for Dan.

Even with a pocketful of money, Zack had no intention of stopping at Levi's. His head "wa'n't sot on jewelry." And he

might not have remained in the shop, if Levi hadn't clutched his arm.

"Lemme go, Mister Levi. Please, suh, lemme go. I've got a 'gagement."

"Love chain?" The jeweler dangled it like a rattle before a baby. "Vimmens is crazy 'bout 'em."

"Say dey is?" The scintillating bauble bewitched him so that Zack reached out and touched it with an awesome finger.

"Dirty-six tollars—dirty-six. But I give it away for fifteen forty-two. Dare you! Dare you!"

Other negroes jammed in behind, with so many eyes upon Zack that no man of spirit could afford to back down.

"I'll take dis necklace." He snickered at the crowd.

His audience gaped, then hushed, as their hero inquired, with splendid nonchalance:

"Mister Levi, what's de finest watch you got?"

"Right here. Abraham Lincoln bought von yust like it."

From a tray of watches in the window, Levi selected the most gaudy, engraved with a red-eyed bird of blue-and-yellow wings.

"Needn't seek no furdur, Mister Levi. My min' is done spoke. What's dis'n wuth?"

"Von hundret tollars. But I'll make it even money, forty-seven eighty-five."

Appreciating the homage of many big, white, staring eyes, Zack leaned one careless elbow on Levi's counter, erupted a volcano of smoke, and nodded. "Dat's my watch. Show me some diamunts."

However promptly his customer decided on purchases, Levi was not born yesterday, and made his calculation: "Sixty-dree twenty-seven. Pay as ve go, an' cheat der bookkeeper."

"I pays cash," Zack proclaimed, as he displayed a wad of currency thick enough to choke a bull, and peeled off fives and tens. "Dere 'tis. Now, den, trot out yo' diamunts."

Eagerly, old Levi shuffled around behind his counter to open the showcase. That's where Levi made his mistake. He let go of Zack's arm.

"Fine rings? Genuwine? Buy a ring? Cheap."

"I 'quires three or fo' o' dese." Zack spread his skinny fingers, and chuckled at the notion of having them strung with jewels. "Dis'n jest fits me. Huh! 'Pears like dat ring's got my name on it — Ow! Ow!"

A scream of agony startled his hearers, as Zack whirled and yelled:

"Stan' back, darkies! You tromped on my corns!"

Thrashing about him with both arms, he suddenly stopped speaking, as he came face to face with the granite countenance of Mr. Rockefeller. One glance was sufficient to make him understand why his toe got stepped on.

"Dere now! I nigh fergot." With Levi grabbing at him, he dashed into the street, calling over his shoulder as he ran: "I'm comin' back. Buy plenty diamunts. Plenty."

SAFE on Main Street once again, the rich colored person kept going as far as Furio's barber shop, where he turned and glared at his ragtag retinue.

"Quit follerin' me, darkies! Git back! I ain't no circus."

As he did not look in the same direction that he traveled, Zack neglected to steer clear of a bootblack stand in front of Furio's shop, and ran against the iron projection on which gentlemen rest their shoes. Sharp as a snag in the Mississippi River, it caught Zack on his flank, on his bulging bump of silver. Something ripped. His pocket burst. Nickels and dimes rattled on the concrete sidewalk; quarters, halves and dollars went spinning. From the bottom of Zack's breeches leg a jingling torrent poured, like water from a spout. Instantly, a dozen negroes on hands and knees went scrambling for it.

"Git away! Leave dat money 'lone!" old Zack stormed. Then he flung his hat on the sidewalk. "Put my money in dere."

Several white men helped him drive off the plunderers, and made what salvage they could. Presently, he rose with a hat full of silver, still raking the sidewalk with his eyes.

"Did you get it all, Zack?" Doctor Stevenson inquired.

"Mighty nigh, suh. Thankee, suh. Y'onderstan', doctor, de way of it was dis——"

At sight of Dan Niblock's scowl, Zack hushed his gabble, and began to hustle. A second running start might have carried him around the filling-station corner into Dan's waiting car, if Zack hadn't spied the sardine cans on Tony Matangas' fruit stall. So Dan suffered through another fit while his victim halted again.

"Mister Tony, please, suh, lemme have some o' dem sardines."

"How many?"

"Ten or 'leben. Lordy, when I used to be po' my mouf sho did crave dem greasy little fishes. Open dese cans, please, suh. Open all of 'em. I'm fixin' to ride in a ottermobile, an' 'zires to tote some lunch. Fo' bits' wuth o' gingersnaps, please, suh. An' fo' bits' wuth o' dat striped candy."

The gingersnaps and candy he piled on his hatful of coins, in the crook of his arm. The other arm he stacked with leaky sardine cans. Bareheaded, dripping like an ice wagon, old Zack cut diagonally through the filling station, and left a trail of oil behind.

Dan's nerves hung on the ragged edge when he took the wheel. Zack had already sprawled himself across the rear seat. He flung out one empty can and began operations on another. The silver lay beside him.

"What ails her?" he queried, as the car refused to budge.

"Damn! Out o' gas."

"Dat's nothin', Mister Rockefeller. Fillin' station right yonder," the contented passenger offered, while conveying sardines to his hopper.

"Yes, I know." Mr. Rockefeller fumbled through the fattest pocketbook that Zack had ever seen. "Hard luck! The smallest money I've got is a thousand-dollar bill."

"Thousan'? How many millions do dat make?"

"Would you mind stepping around to the bank right quick and getting me some change?"

"Plenty change right dere, suh. I don't aim to travel dat street, 'cause dem

darkies pesters me. Jest reach in my hat, suh."

NOTHING happened during those crucial moments at the gas station, and Dan drew freer breath as they sped out of town.

Unfortunately for Zack's complete efficiency, nature had only provided him with a single mouth to manage one dozen cans of sardines, to smoke his cigar, to consume a peck of gingersnaps, and nibble at his peppermint candy. Under this handicap he struggled nobly, and talked, besides.

"Mister, yo' car runs splendid."

"Like a dream."

"I loves to drive 'em. One time while I was po', Alec Watson 'lowed me to drive his Fo'd to town. It's easy. You jest step on a few things, an' pull out a few things, den grab de wheel an' let 'er go Gallagher."

"You found no trouble in learning to drive?" Dan questioned cautiously, for Zack had suggested a possible variation to his scheme.

"Not me. I l'arns swift. Heap o' things I don't need to l'arn—jest knows how. Dat's me."

Through the mild November morning they rolled along so merrily that Zack chuckled from the rear seat: "Step on it, mister. Step on it."

"No. We've got to stop. Here's the property."

"Stop already? I loves to ride."

"Get out. There's our man."

Unconcernedly, Zack glanced toward a fidgety-looking red-headed white man, who appeared to be pacing off distances.

"Lordy, mister, I wouldn't pay no 'tention to dis place. Dis ain't nothin' 'cept Jedge Barber's ole pasture."

"Sh! I'm going to run a railroad through here. Build my big hotel right where that man is standing. That's the lot I want to buy."

As his car stopped, Dan leaned back to give final instructions.

"Pay a hundred dollars for it. Then I'll give you a thousand."

"Mister, ef it's jest de same wid you, I'd love to ride while I finishes my sardines."

"After you buy that lot. Then we'll ride. Hurry! Hurry!"

"Lordy," Zack said, grinning amiably, "dat sounds jest like de cunnel. He's all de time rushin' me: 'Hurry, Zack, hurry.'"

Deliberately as a slow mule, the negro climbed out, and went strolling in the general direction of that red-headed man. With tense anxiety, Dan Niblock watched their meeting, yet never once took his attention from the road. For Dan was worse scared than Pinkey, waiting there in plain view, while any of those approaching autos might bring its load of deputies. For three nights this flying pair had whizzed through Texas and Louisiana in a car that they knew was being searched for. Now their lives depended upon getting money.

Dan's frightened eyes shifted back and forth, dreading every car that came, watching Pinkey's frantic negotiations with the negro. His throat was getting dry, his fingers were turning cold from terror. Perhaps Pinkey might have been right. It might be quicker and safer to bludgeon that darky, hide him and their car, then run.

In the pasture Pinkey kept talking manfully; but Zack showed no sign of giving up his money. Instead, the negro turned away, and came sauntering back to Dan.

"What's the matter, old man?" Dan was raging internally. "Won't he sell you that lot?"

"Yas, suh, mister. But dat white man talks so jerky I can't keep up wid him. Lemme jest set here an' eat sardines ontill I ketches my breff."

Several autos came speeding toward them, and Dan got panicky.

"See here, old man! You like to ride?"

"Sho do."

"Why not take this car and ride?"

"Me? Take yo' car?"

"Yes. Buy it. For a hundred. Cash."

"Dat'll be mighty nice." Crushing a mouthful of sardines, Zack smacked his greasy lips.

"Talk quick, old man. Talk quick!"

While the negro seemed to hesitate, Dan trembled on the verge of hysteria, and grasped his hammer. But if he

knocked this fool in the head it would cause a fresh pursuit, which he was eager to avoid. Then the sardine consumer relieved their situation by deciding.

"Suits me, suh. I got my mind sot on ridin' a heap."

Two minutes closed the transaction.

"Here, old man. Take the wheel. You know how to drive?"

"Yas, suh. Pull back a few o' dem things; den tromp on some."

"Like this." Dan started the car, very slowly. "That's fine. Press harder with your foot when you want to go fast."

"Sholy, suh. I loves to move rapid."

Dan stepped off the running board. He and Pink immediately subtracted themselves from the population of that neighborhood. Zack's tentative foot bore down. The car gathered speed.

"Shucks! Dat's easier 'n fallin' off a log."

THE engine purred. Before him lay no end of road, stretching on out and forever. His hat was off. The wind tickled his bald head. He crowed like a baby. Then, full of hilarity and sardines, old Zack stepped on the gas.

The world was his. Cabins, trees, fences raced by. Behind him came an occasional auto, honking to pass. Zack had only scorn for them.

"Huh! When I gits de hang o' dis *real* good, 'taint none o' you-all goin' by me."

He experimented some, zigzagged, turned whichever way he desired.

"Jest as *easy*."

With some prudence, Zack maneuvered around a curve, then the road straightened again, level and smooth as a billiard table.

"Now den, darkies, watch my smoke!" Zack moved on, on, for miles.

Several hundred yards at the rear a horn commenced to blow, quick, sharp, alarming as a fire-department siren. Over his shoulder Zack glimpsed them, and grinned.

"Hush yo' fuss!"

Time, speed, distance meant nothing. Far ahead he saw a glint of water. It seemed as if the road were running directly into it.

"Dere's Lake Adams! Huh! I done traveled fo'teen miles!"

His pursuers kept honking, while Zack laughed gleefully.

"Shet up. I kin beat you plumb to Noo Yawk."

He was approaching the lake, where the road took a bend to the left. The noisy car that followed began to pester Zack.

"How come dey raise all dat dere racket?"

Although his head was buzzing, Zack considered that he'd better slow down for the curve. That's what the colonel always did.

"Jest step on sumpin', an' stop."

Zack stepped on something. But he did not stop. To his amazement the car leaped forward like a rabbit from a brush pile. So he bore down harder. His car roared, ducked, dodged. He sideswiped a telephone pole, cleared it, wobbled, then leaped some more, and left his chasers far behind. Then somebody fired a shot. That scared Zack and made him glance back.

It really was not his fault. He just happened to glance back. And the road just happened to bend. Lake Adams lay straight in front, with a stump at precisely the wrong spot. That is why the car hit the stump, and that is why Zack went out of the car, through the wind

shield. The next thing Zack hit was water.

When a fuzzy bald head bobbed up, Old Reliable was swimming like a frog. Three men rushed toward him, with pistols.

"That's the car, all right!" their leader shouted. And Zack recognized Bud Starkie, deputy sheriff.

"Come out of there. Quick!"

"I'm a-comin', suh."

"Zack!" Bud exclaimed. "What t'hell?"

A bedraggled old negro crawled out from the lake and proceeded to gather up the sardines that were scattered from the car.

"Where are those white men?" Starkie demanded.

"Never paid 'em no mind, Mister Bud."

I was travelin' my own self."

"Where did you leave them?"

"Back yonder in Jedge Barber's field."

In a sort of daze old Zack sat down on the stump which had caused his calamity, and began probing a sardine can with long, skinny fingers.

"Jump in our car. Zack—quick," the deputy sheriff urged. "Come show us where those fellows went."

"No, sirree, Mister Bud. I ain't aimin' to trust dese sardines to nary 'nother ottermobile. Not until I eats 'em. Ottermobiles is too risky."



DIRECT NATURAL POWER

IT is interesting to speculate on what could be done with the forces of nature if man could harness them for direct power as he would like to do, and as it seems not unreasonable to believe he will be able to do, some day. We have in mind water power and wind power. Of course they have been used to a very considerable extent, but if they were used to the extent of which we are speaking, no other sort of power would be necessary.

Perhaps the greatest single instance of the use of wind power is contemplated by the builders of a gigantic windmill which is being constructed in the neighborhood of Leipzig, Germany. The steel tower is to be two thousand feet high, and the wheel will have a diameter of six hundred feet. It is estimated that the wheel will make an average of two hundred and fifty revolutions per minute, and that each blade will thus develop one thousand seven hundred horse power. This force will be used to generate electricity, and will do so extremely cheaply.

It is also planned to use the tower as a radio broadcasting and receiving station. In addition there will be a restaurant a thousand feet in the air, halfway up.

The calculations put the cost of constructing the entire project at approximately three hundred thousand dollars, and the operating expenses will be next to nothing.

The Fowler String



BY

J.S. Pickering

This is the story of a pearl necklace so valuable that it couldn't be stolen successfully, and of the man who tried to steal it.

SILAS TIPPING'S office, in which he saw the more important of his many clients, contained nothing in the way of furnishings that might distract attention from the wares which he had to display. It was trimmed in soft walnut, carpeted in gray chenille, and the windows were hung with soft gray curtains. Silas' chair was separated from those in which his customers sat, by a large walnut table covered with black broadcloth, and on this table, awaiting his perusal, was the morning mail in a neat pile, topped by a list of appointments and other memoranda which had been prepared for him by his secretary. Silas sat comfortably rocking in his swivel chair, and read the list.

On this morning, in the depth of the dull July season, which is the nadir of the jewelry trade, the list was small, but in it one item stood out to Silas like a lighthouse in a fog. It was short, and to the casual eye, unimportant, but it deserves a paragraph to itself.

"Mr. Roberts phoned to say that Mr. F. would be in at ten thirty."

Mr. Roberts was the extremely private and confidential secretary to Reuben Fowler, who possessed, in a most quiet and unostentatious way, one of the world's great fortunes. The old millionaire had been one of Tipping's customers for years, and, since his first visit, had been referred to only as Mr. F. His intense dislike for publicity of any sort amounted to an obsession, and led him to demand absolute discretion of Silas, who would gladly have given his right hand to be allowed to proclaim to the world that it was he who supplied Reuben Fowler with most of his famous collection of jewels. Any one of Fowler's purchases would have been a good year's business for many a jeweler, and Silas had no desire to kill the goose that laid such eggs.

SILAS picked up the list again and examined the item about Fowler, as if he might draw from those few words, by careful study, a knowledge of the business which the old gentleman had in view. It was his boast that he never let a summer go by without making a big sale,

and, up to this morning, he had had no inkling, no lead at all on the transaction with which he hoped to redeem this particular dull season. The announcement of Fowler's visit put him on the alert, and he ran over in his mind the various important pieces which he had seen in the hands of importers and wholesalers. It is an extremely important part of the jeweler's art to be able to locate and show, on short notice, such gems as he may not have, or cannot afford to carry in his own stock. Reuben Fowler's collection contained nothing which was not the finest of its class. He had diamonds of the fierce Golconda blue, which makes the blue of the finest Jager look smoky, and fades the whitest Wesselton into yellow. He had emeralds whose flaws were negligible, and whose rich, deep green smoldered in quiet perfection. He had sapphires of a blue softer than the softest velvet, and of a depth beyond the power of the eye to plumb. He had pearls!

Silas settled himself deeper in his chair and thought of Fowler's pearls.

He remembered the last time he had had the Fowler necklace in his office for an addition. He had laid the string out in a pearl tray, a grooved board, lined with white satin, on his table. It lay there like a ribbon of sunset—seventy-nine pearls, so many kings' ransoms—each pearl perfect, each one a true sphere, each one reflecting gloriously, from its delicate surface, every point of light in Silas' office. Each window, the cheval glass in the corner, the ceiling fixtures, the glint of the glass from the cover of the scales, were all thrown back in subdued rainbow tints, their images pleasingly distorted by the roundness of the pearls.

The pearls themselves were of an indefinable rose color, enriched by an even tinge of rich cream—a color as fixed and firm as the blue of the sky, containing "all the depth and the shine of the sea," but at the same time as elusive and as intangible as perfume. One moment they were one thing—the next, with the mood of the beholder, they changed to something that was the same, but not quite the same, but never, under any circumstances, to anything less wonderful.

And, most marvelous of all, each of the seventy-nine was like its neighbor—so like that it seemed that the same gigantic oyster must have borne them all. But, when one examined them closely, they still confirmed the old maxim of the trade, that no two gems are alike. There were subtle differences. Certain pearls were marked with those tiny, even indentations known as "hammer marks," which serve only to accentuate the beauty and interest of fine pearls. Certain of them excelled, in sheer brilliance, over others which blushed with a richer color; but all, without a single exception, were without peers, save among themselves. And, in Silas' hand, had lain two more, fitted by birth and breeding to take their places in this glorious company.

One of these two pearls was of a size, almost exactly, with the largest of the seventy-nine which lay before him on the board. The other was larger, and would become the new center of the necklace. Reverently, Silas inserted a small pair of scissors between the center pearl and the one next to it, and cut the knotted silk, with the air of a physician who operates in order to save. Then he slid the necklace apart, and dropped the two new candidates into the places which he hoped they would occupy in the string. They slid in, settled, and blended at once in the even rise and fall of the necklace's graduation, fitting perfectly in size and color, and were accepted without hesitation by Reuben Fowler, who had watched the rite with great interest.

OF all the Fowler gems, the necklace stood supreme. Its worth was actually incalculable, for, were it destroyed, there did not exist eighty-one other such pearls with which to replace it. Reuben Fowler had paid for it, over many years of collecting, more money than many rich men accumulate in a lifetime. In every center of the jewel trade, from the fisheries up, men were on the watch for pearls which would match this collection; and, when they were found, which was an occurrence of extreme rarity, they were drawn irresistibly into that necklace, and usually by way of Silas Tipping. Silas had had the care of this necklace ever

since Fowler had become a customer, for Silas was the acknowledged master of that most elusive, delicate and expensive of all the earth's treasures, the pearl.

Whenever the necklace was delivered to Mrs. Fowler from Tipping's, it was handled with all the extreme care that its value and beauty demanded. Mrs. Fowler, on receiving it, clasped it immediately around her neck and forgot it, so accustomed had she become to its presence.

Silas, rocking in his swivel chair, considered again the problem before him. The curse of it all was that Fowler was probably after more pearls; and those two which he had added a short time ago were the last, and likely to be the last, which would come into the market for some time. If he could only switch the gentle old man away from pearls, and concentrate on that emerald of Henry Frolich's! There was a stone which Fowler alone, of all the customers with whom Silas dealt, could afford to buy. Frolich represented a syndicate which owned the stone now, and was holding it for twelve thousand a carat. If Silas could sell it, the profits on the sale would make him satisfied to sit in his comfortable chair and rock for the rest of the summer. That would be an off-season sale to shoot at, too.

Well, all Fowler could say was, "No!"

A sudden hush in the outer office, where the staff was setting out the stock in the cases, told Silas that Fowler had arrived; and, an instant later, the two men faced each other across the broad-cloth top of Silas' table. Fowler was dressed completely in brown, as always, and acknowledged Silas' greeting by a precise nod of his short, dark beard. Silas contented himself with a "Good morning!" and waited for the other to speak. Fowler sat for an instant in silence, tapping the edge of the table with his broad finger tips, seeming, as he always did, to prepare the words he was about to say before he spoke them. Then, raising his eyes to meet those of Silas, he made a startling announcement, in a purely conversational tone:

"Mr. Tipping, Mrs. Fowler has lost her necklace."

Silas flung up his head with a jerk, and

gripped the arms of his chair. He did not trust his ears, but could not force himself to ask Fowler to repeat his sentence. That was apt to be irritating. That necklace lost! All that beauty and power out of control! Not giving him a chance to speak, Fowler went on:

"It disappeared some time yesterday. We have investigated every possible avenue of loss, and can find no trace of it. It may have been stolen. I do not know. I am sure no one has entered my home, and I think I know my servants. Mrs. Fowler is sure she wore the necklace yesterday, when she went out, first to the shops, and then to play bridge; but she has become so accustomed to it that she did not miss it until she had been back for some time. She is not at all sure whether or not she had it on when she returned. That makes it impossible for us to time its disappearance accurately. We have searched the car that she used. My only thought now is that it was taken from Mrs. Fowler's neck, and I find it very difficult to bring myself to accept such a melodramatic hypothesis. I am coming to you first of all, because I have great confidence in you, and in your wide experience. I wish you would tell me what to do, under the circumstances."

"Have you notified the insurance companies?"

"Not yet. I am making every effort to avoid publicity in this matter, and I know that the insurance people would not be as discreet as you will be. You are more familiar with the necklace than any one except me, and you know more about it, technically, even than I do."

Silas sat a moment in silence. Behind his expressionless mask, his mind was racing. He thought the whole situation through in a flash, and knew that he was right. He joined his finger tips and pressed them to his lips, controlling himself with an effort. Then he spoke, carefully, choosing his words:

"Mr. Fowler, I have an idea. I have as much pride in the part I have had in the creation of that necklace as you have in its possession. I want you to know that I am working with you, heart and soul, in this thing, even if I do seem a bit vague. Give me two weeks, for the

sake of your privacy. If the necklace is not recovered, or on the way to recovery at the end of that time, I can see no alternative, except to call in the insurance company. I can promise nothing, but I have great faith in this idea of mine, and I ask you to let me try it out for two weeks. Will you?"

Fowler looked at Silas steadily for the space of several seconds. Then he nodded. It was not for nothing that Silas had kept faith with him for nearly twenty years.

"Yes. As I said, I have great confidence in you. I shall not ask you to tell me the nature of your idea, for I know I do not care to disclose any of my own before they mature. Good luck to you. You will keep in touch with me?"

"Of course. I wish that you, too, would let me know at once if you hear anything of the necklace before the two weeks are up. And please do not let any word of your loss get out."

"That would be the last thing I should do. And now, good morning! I feel a certain relief at having shared my secret with you. If you need financial aid in your search, call on me. Good-by and good luck!"

When his visitor had gone, Silas walked back through the store to the water cooler and drew himself a drink. He stood for a moment with the little paper cup in his hand, thinking, and then proposed a silent toast to himself.

"Silas, my boy, here's luck to you! You'll need it!"

At the instant Reuben Fowler was leaving Tipping's office, Mrs. Fowler's chauffeur, Martin Byrne, was arriving at his single room, far uptown. He had reported for duty that morning, as usual, but had been told that Mrs. Fowler was not well, and that he might take the day off. He had come straight home, locked the door behind him, and, turning back the mattress on his bed, had reached into a slit cut into it—and from that slit he drew out the Fowler necklace.

To Martin, it represented the fruit of years of patient and watchful waiting. Before he went to work for the Fowlers,

he had never heard of the necklace, never dreamed that such a thing existed. During the eleven years he had spent driving Mrs. Fowler around, he had come to know her far better than he himself realized. From long acquaintance, he was familiar with the most intimate detail of her outward dress. Her tall, Queen Mary hat, her inevitable boa, the ever-present umbrella, the strictly tailored dress, the quiet, simple furs, were all stored in his unconscious mind; and, while he could not have described her costume for the life of him, he would instantly have noted any alteration or omission in it.

Almost as familiar to him had become many of her jewels. She wore rings constantly, and her pearls she never left off. They had not impressed Martin at first, so casually did Mrs. Fowler wear them. Then, too, he had seen men on the sidewalks selling great ropes of them for a quarter, and all pearls were alike to him. Conversation with Jenny, who attended Mrs. Fowler, and had the inestimable privilege of handling the jewels she wore, had opened his eyes to the value of the necklace. He was incredulous, at first, taking Jenny's valuation, to him stupendous, with a good portion of salt; but the chattering little maid had planted a seed in the rich soil of Martin's brain, which took root and grew and flourished in spite of him and without his knowledge.

At first, he amused himself, in the long moments of waiting which are the lot of a chauffeur, by imagining what could be done with the money they represented. Then his mental image changed, and he began to think what he, Martin Byrne, could do with it—with the value of half of it—of a quarter of it—with the worth of the largest pearls—of the smallest—and this speculation amazed him. He had never had a dishonest thought in his life; but the constant presence of this necklace riding behind him, began to get the best of him.

He would never steal it. That would be throwing away his soul. But, suppose she lost it? Suppose he should find it and sell it? No one would ever be the wiser!

This thought swept through him sud-

denly, one morning, and never left him for five years. Every day he watched Mrs. Fowler with the eyes of a hawk as she stepped into the car. Yes! She was wearing them! He could see the necklace, softly gleaming and sinuous beneath her boa, among the laces at her throat. He turned, every time she left the car, and searched the floor, the seats, the robes, with his glance.

Days and months went by, years passed, and time served only to strengthen him in his waiting. Five years Martin spent in this purgatory of deferred hope, sticking to his one idea with a determination which must have moved mountains if fastened on a more worthy object. "Everything comes to him who waits"—in this thought he lived and moved and had his being.

One evening, toward the end of this period, he was in a garage, having some small repair attended to. He listened to the talk of a group of taxi drivers who were there, and heard one tell of driving three hurried young men, laden with suit cases, to a certain address, of waiting there under the surveillance of one of them, and of driving them away again, minus the suit cases.

"It was a fence, sure! Why, 'em guys was stick-ups, sure as hell! I figured I was lucky to git away wit'out gittin' a rod stuck in me back! All 'em guys peddles 'at stuff as soon as they pinches it! You can bet yer neck on that!"

A fence! Martin moved away, his temples throbbing. He stored the address in his memory. He was being driven at the thing! Here was his one idea, germinating in his mind, being forced into sudden blossom by this chance information. His plan was complete now.

Still he waited, watching; and one day, as he knew it would, it happened!

HE had driven Mrs. Fowler shopping, then to a charity bridge, and was facing the prospect of a long afternoon parked in the rain, waiting for her. He stopped before the house, flung open the car door, and aided her to alight with a touch of his hand. She turned to him as she was received beneath the umbrella of the doorman.

"Don't wait, Martin. It's raining too hard. Came back for me at five thirty."

He bowed.

"Very well, Mrs. Fowler."

She went up the steps of the house, gathering her skirts about her.

Martin turned, automatically, to make his inspection of the car. He leaned inside, and saw the necklace there on the floor. A cold wave passed over him, he blinked; but when his eyes opened again, it was still there. Then, without changing his expression, without a tremor, he made the first of the moves which he had been rehearsing for five years. Carefully, without haste, he coiled the necklace in his hand, concealing his act behind the operation of folding the robe, and, as he turned away, he thrust his hands in his pockets, in the most natural way in the world, pausing a moment before he climbed into his seat. Another car, drawing up to the curb behind his, requested room with a mellow note, and he drove off, making his way without undue haste, to the garage.

He felt strangely calm. So often had he laid and relaid his plans against this very occasion, that every move seemed familiar to him. He put up the car even more deliberately than usual, to satisfy himself that he was not betraying himself by any outward or visible show of emotion.

He donned his raincoat, walked to the subway, and in half an hour was in his room, far uptown. He entered, locked the door behind him, and drew the necklace from his pocket. He rolled back the mattress on his bed, cut a small slit in the bottom, thrust the pearls into the matted fiber as far as he could, and pinned up the hole with a safety pin.

Then he returned to the garage, and, at five thirty, was waiting for Mrs. Fowler, his whole being steeled against some sign of her discovery of her loss. Nothing happened. She greeted him with her usual impersonal nod, and he drove her home.

Before he was dismissed that evening, however, the loss had become known. He was sent for and questioned. Yes, Mrs. Fowler had used the car. No, he had not noticed her necklace. No, he had

not seen it in the car at any time; but the car was there, and he would look again. Reuben Fowler himself did the questioning in his precise manner, but with the kindliness of mood which one exhibits toward a trusted employee of seven years' standing; and it was Reuben who came out with him and looked through the car thoroughly, taking up cushions and floor mats, assisted by his fluttering and agitated secretary, Roberts. Reuben bade Martin good night at nine; and the chauffeur went unhurriedly away, but with a tumult of exultation in his heart that was near to bursting him.

As soon as he reached his room, he got out the necklace and looked at it. It was the first chance he had had to examine his treasure. There was nothing in the world that he knew less about than pearls, but he could see that this thing was magic. He held it coiled in the palm of his hand and stared down at it. Even in the small light from his one bulb across the room, it glowed in his palm, and was cool and comfortable against the rough skin of his hand. He laid it down on his pillow, and it shone, pink and cream and iridescent against the white of the muslin, and as he played with it, it seemed alive in that it glowed with an inward fire—a soft, gentle flame that seemed a soul. He ran it through his hands; he loved it; he worshiped it. He had not the faintest conception of what he had, but he did know that it was the most stirring, the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

THE next day, unexpectedly released by Mrs. Fowler's illness, and eager to dispose of the necklace before Fowler should have aroused too many "blood-hounds" on its trail, he stuffed the pearls in his pocket, and made his way down to the mean street where he expected to find his fence.

He paused before the shabby building which bore the address he had heard from the taxi driver, wondering which of the many tenants was the man he wanted to see. He went in, and wandered through the halls until he came to a door which bore the legend: "Sol Shapiro. Pearls and Precious Stones. Jewelry Bought and Sold. Estates Appraised." This looked

reasonable to him, and he pushed open the door and went in.

He was in a large room, along one side of which stretched a counter, with a set of jeweler's scales and a few pieces of black velvet on it. Two chairs stood before this counter, in one of which was seated a young man, too tastefully dressed, who was talking to a short, stout and shabby man who stood on the other side. At Martin's entrance, their conversation ceased, suddenly, and they both turned to face him. Not a word was spoken for some seconds; then the stout man said:

"Vell?"

Somehow, Martin knew that he was in the right place.

"Mr. Shapiro?"

The stout man nodded coolly. Martin did not bear any of the earmarks of his clientele.

"I'd like to see you for a few moments."

Mr. Shapiro nodded again, and motioned with his eloquent head toward a door at the other end of the room. Martin walked across to it, followed every inch of the way by the eyes of the two men, and walked into the inner office. A small table, a large desk, a safe and more scales, together with two chairs, furnished this room, whose dusty windows filtered in a soft gray light. He stood there for a moment, facing the door through which he had come. Shapiro pushed it open, and closed it, with difficulty, behind his back, and spoke again:

"Vell?"

"You buy jewelry?"

Nod.

"No questions?"

Nod.

"I've got something I'd like you to look at."

"Who sent you to me?"

"Nobody. I heard some people talking about you."

"Yes?"

"Yes!" Martin was becoming impatient. "Listen! I'm no cop! I've got something here to sell. Do you want it, or don't you? All I want to do is to get some cash and get out. Never mind where I heard about you, or anything

else. Now, do we do business, or don't we?"

"All right! All right! Don't get egg-sided! In dis business, y'understand, a man's gotta be careful, ain't it? Vot you got?"

"Anybody around?"

"No. It's all right."

Martin went to the door and opened it. The young man had gone. He closed the door again and, leaning over the table, drew out the necklace and handed it to Shapiro. Shapiro took it, gasped, and shot a quick glance at Martin out of his pig eyes. He laid it on the table, gasped again, and wiped his head with a flamboyant handkerchief. The necklace lighted up the whole room as it lay there, and seemed to scorn the poor conspirators who were bargaining over it. Shapiro touched it with his fingers, drew it toward him, leaned over it, picked it up and played with it, ran it through his fingers, fondled it, rolled it back and forth on the table to observe the perfect rotundity of the pearls and finally turned to Martin.

"Do you know vot you got here?"

Martin nodded.

"Pretty good, eh?"

"Bretty goot! Listen! Do you know whose string dis is?"

"Never mind whose string it is! I got it, and that's enough! Do you want to buy it?"

"Do I want to buy it? I should live so long! Lissen to me! If you don't know whose string dat is, I do! Don't tell me if I'm right oder not—I know! I don't know where you got it. I ain't interested; but let me esk you someding: Vot d'you t'ink you should get for it, hey?"

"Why, it's worth a pile of money, ain't it?"

"More money dan you t'ink is in the vurt! I ain't got enough to buy it! You should give me dat much gredit! No, you dry someheres else, my friendt! Blease! Not here!"

Shapiro pushed the necklace over toward Martin, with something almost like a shudder. Martin looked at him, surprised and puzzled.

"Dake it out of here, my friendt! I

shouldn't get mixed up in dis. You go someheres else!" He picked up the necklace and thrust it into Martin's hands.

"Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You buy this kind of stuff, don't you?"

"Yes! But not dis neglace! Dake it away! I esk you noddin! I say not a vurt, but blease, dake it away!"

"All right! All right! Don't get excited! Where'll I take it to?"

"My friendt, I don't know. Dry some odder blace around here. Maybe you have some luck. Me—I ain't dat rich. Goot-py, my friendt! I'm sorry!"

Shapiro had Martin out of the door and into the outer office as he spoke. Martin thrust the necklace again into his pocket, and left without another word.

How the devil did Shapiro know whose necklace it was? Was word of it around already? He calmed himself. All pearl necklaces were alike; but this one was a valuable one. Nevertheless, he walked onesidedly, keeping a quick glance running over his shoulder. Shapiro wouldn't talk; he was a fence himself, and it would pay him to keep his mouth shut.

HE stood for a moment on a corner, wondering what next. He still had most of the day before him, and the necklace was burning his pocket. He walked a few steps, and paused before a window loaded with a miscellany of mandolins, andirons, clocks, radios and cheap jewelry. He had been staring at the jumble of things for several minutes before he realized that he was looking into a pawnshop window. Here was another chance. A "hock shop" in this neighborhood couldn't be so particular; and while he couldn't get anything like what the necklace was worth, he would probably be amply repaid for his adventure. He went in, and as his eyes accustomed themselves to the gloom of the interior, he saw a middle-aged, stooped man looking at him expectantly from behind the counter. Martin went over to him, and, wasting no time on cautious preliminaries, since the shop was empty of other customers, he laid the necklace quickly down on the counter, and said:

"What'll you give me on that?"

The man picked it up carelessly, and looked at Martin with the weary expression of one who is sick and tired of turning down worthless strings of imitations. With a shrug, he turned away and carried the necklace nearer to the cluttered window. Martin followed him on the other side of the counter. He saw the man pour the necklace out of his palm so that it might take the light, heard him suck in his breath under the stress of powerful emotion, saw him turn and stumble back, holding the necklace at the length of his outstretched arm. The man spoke, and his voice was a screech, thin and piping, of fear and amazement:

"Here! Here! Take this away! Get it out of here! I'm an honest man! Take it away!" He flung the necklace at Martin and backed away from him, making shooing motions with his hands. "Go away! Go away! I'm an honest man!"

Martin seized the necklace and left, disgusted. A fine couple of pikers! Just because he showed them something real, they got cold feet! He decided to annoy the illegitimate jewel trade no more that day, and returned to his room.

Once there, he sat regarding the necklace as it lay on his bed, and thought. Evidently the thing was much too big for either of the men he had showed it to that day. He looked at it, as it lay there. If anything ever looked like a million dollars in ready money, that did! As he watched it, it grew on him, it seemed to reach out and lay hold of his spirit like an incubus. It puzzled him, somehow, but he did not yet know enough to be afraid of it. There was only the faintest suspicion of a doubt in his mind that he would have any further trouble in disposing of it, and he proceeded to allay that doubt by making the bait less imposing. He picked up the necklace and examined it. It was strung on silk, and a knot had been tied in the silk after every pearl. He took out his penknife and cut the thread, just between the knot and the smallest pearl, on the end of the necklace. That pearl came loose in his hand, but the rest of the string was held together by the knot which he had left intact. He tied the loose pearl into the

corner of his handkerchief, wrapped the necklace up in the rest of it, and hid it again in his mattress.

He had no further opportunities to dispose of his find for the next few days. His job demanded all of his time, and he drove Mrs. Fowler, again composed and serene as usual, on the daily rounds. The second day he was struck, suddenly, by the lack of hue and cry after the necklace. He had expected great headlines in the papers, interviews with detectives and police, any and all of which he had schooled himself to meet; and the continued silence and apparent lack of suspicion worried him. His first thought was that the necklace had not been so valuable, after all, but this thought was quickly dispelled by the remembrance of Fowler's strict search, and the agitation of the two men to whom he had already shown the necklace.

He began to be disturbed. It was not natural that people should suffer such a loss and take it so calmly. Of course, the Fowlers were rich past all belief, but even people as rich as the Fowlers could not stand the loss of such a valuable piece of jewelry, without making some effort to find it. Did they know, in some mysterious way, open only to the esoteric rich, that he had taken the necklace, and were they just biding their time until he should give himself away?

He walked warily, with this thought in his mind, not knowing at what moment he might feel a heavy hand fall upon his shoulder, and a bass voice boom in his ear, bidding him come along and confess.

On the third day, he dared not speak, without careful thought, lest his unwatched tongue shout his secret to the world. His nerves were jumpy, and the everyday minor strains of driving in traffic were magnified a thousandfold, and tired him more, so that, had it not been for thinking of the necklace, he could have slept much better than usual.

ON the next day, he was free at noon, and went home, got the necklace, and went down again to try his luck. He walked for some time around the neighborhood of his first attempts, and finally

entered a tiny, dingy office whose door announced that T. Douroubjian dealt in pearls, diamonds and precious stones. Here he met a thin, dark and greasy gentleman, who advanced to meet him with a deferential bow and an expectant rubbing of hands, but whose attitude changed to one of skeptical hostility on learning that Martin came not to buy, but to sell. As before, he was ushered into a rear office, and there displayed to the pessimistic Armenian the pearl which he had cut from the necklace.

The man picked it up and examined it, casually. Then he glanced quickly at Martin, and turned again to the pearl, giving it a more searching scrutiny. He rolled it on his table, and poked it about on the palm of his hand with a long, thin, and not too immaculate forefinger. He turned to Martin.

"You have more like this, no?"

"Maybe I have."

"How many?"

"Never mind that. I want to sell this one, first."

The Armenian shrugged.

"How much?"

"You tell me. It's worth a lot of money, ain't it?"

"Maybe. To sell, perhaps. Not to buy. If you leave it for a few days, two or three, maybe I sell it for you. I must look at it. I must think where I can sell it, yes?"

"No! You tell me now. I'll sell it cheap!"

"Yes! But it is all right! I do not talk. No."

Martin stood a moment in thought. This was the first encouragement he had got. Suppose he did leave it? This guy wouldn't go and spill the beans for just one pearl. He turned again to the man.

"You'll keep your mouth shut, sure?"

"Of course! You leave it. It will be all right. You come back Thursday or Friday. I tell you then."

Martin nodded. It was an effort for him to make up his mind, even to this concession.

He went back to his room, and hid the rest of the necklace again. He decided to give the Armenian his full time, and tried desperately to convince himself that

he was at last making a start toward his dreams of fortune.

In spite of his efforts, however, he was doubtful. The necklace had begun to cast a spell over him. He looked at it now, and began to find it malignant, instead of beautiful. It appalled him, terrified him. He could not keep from examining it, but he regarded it with a difference. It was stronger than he, in its silent, mysterious power; and he dreaded it. Mutilated as it was, it still overwhelmed him.

Every day, when he went home from his work, he approached the door with his heart in his mouth, fearful that the law might be seated there, waiting for him. He locked his door every morning, explaining to his landlady that he preferred to make his own bed and do his own cleaning. That philosophical lady merely shrugged, and wished that the rest of the roomers were like him. He was afraid to carry the necklace around with him, and he had not a moment's peace when he was away from it. He could not sleep, for he could never feel satisfied that it was safe in its place, even fifteen minutes after he himself had put it there, but must get up, tear his bed apart, and look at it again. He could not eat, he could not live normally, and he finally vowed that he would take anything, no matter how small, that the Armenian would give him for the pearl, and throw the nest of the necklace in with it.

ON Friday he went again to see Mr. Douroubjian, and found that person waiting for him. Eager as he was to sell, he breathed a sigh of relief when Douroubjian rolled the pearl out on his table.

"Well," he said, "what do you say?"

The Armenian shook his head.

"I am curious," he said, "to know where you got this pearl."

"That's none of your business!"

"All right. But I will tell you why I ask. This is a very fine pearl; there is only one necklace, that I know of, where this pearl would go. That is the necklace of Reuben Fowler. Perhaps you know him, no?"

"No!" Martin exploded

"Well, his necklace is like this pearl. Have you more of them?" The Armenian leaned forward, evil in his eagerness.

"I have not! I just found that one!"

"You said perhaps you had more! I thought, if you had, you might show them to me. Just to see—for I cannot buy—but if I could just see that necklace, just once!"

"What necklace? I don't know what in hell you're talking about!"

"Reuben Fowler's necklace!"

Martin snatched for his pearl and fled, leaving the Armenian still leaning over the table, baffled in his desire to see the one thing about which he had dreamed and thought since he took up the trading of pearls as a vocation.

Martin hastened to the street, left the neighborhood, and finally, after putting plenty of ground between the uncanny Mr. Douroubjian and himself, he stood again on the curb, thinking. What possessed the necklace, and further, what possessed all these shyster merchants? How could they know whose pearls these were? The necklace was worse than useless to him, and he knew that if he had to live with it much longer, he should go mad. He would take it back to Shapiro, give him one more chance at it, in part or whole, and then, if that failed, he would throw the thing down the first sewer. It was getting him nothing but a lot of grief. He wished to Heaven he had never seen it!

Shapiro was alone in his office, and took Martin immediately into his back room.

"Vot is it now, my friendt?" he asked, unctuously, expecting some rather less cumbersome loot from this man who, he suspected, was some new super-Raffles, with whom it might be profitable to form an alliance.

"Same thing. Sure you don't want to take a chance on it? I'll sell it cheap, damn cheap, or even one of the pearls."

Shapiro rose suddenly, his face a pasty gray.

"You still got dat t'ing? No! No! Dake it out! I shouldn't even look at it! You shouldn't keep it so long! It must be missed by dis time!"

"What the devil will I do with it?"

Martin almost shouted in his exasperation. "I've peddled it all over New York, and all you damn pikers are scared to death of it! If you don't take it, I'm goin' to chuck it in the river!"

"I guess you wouldn't do dat. Und if you should, my friendt, I dell you, I couldn't fish it out. It is too much for me. Dere is only vun man in the city who could handle dis t'ing, and maybe not him, even."

"Who is that? Would he buy it? What's his name?"

"Dat is Feldstein, up on Maiden Lane. If any one dakes it, he does. You dry him. Me—I ain't so ambitious."

Martin was away and out of the door. One last try, and then away with it! His idea now was not so much to get money for his find, as to get rid of it. If he could realize something, anything, in freeing himself of its deadly influence, so much the better! If not, he would thank his stars that he no longer had it.

At the address on Maiden Lane, he entered an office much like that of Shapiro, but here there seemed to be a legitimate business going on. A clerk approached him, and he asked to see Mr. Feldstein.

"What is it about, please?"

"Sol Shapiro sent me."

The name was a password. He was shown into an inner office, more luxuriously appointed than was that of Shapiro. There he faced a tall, sardonic man, who regarded him inquiringly from behind gleaming pince-nez.

After the door had closed behind the clerk, Martin spoke. It had been all he could do to wait until the other had gone, before blurting out his story.

"Shapiro sent me to you. I've got something I want to sell, and he said you might buy it. Do you want to see it?"

Feldstein nodded, not taking his eyes from Martin's face. Martin drew from his pocket the handkerchief containing the one pearl, untied it, and laid it on Feldstein's desk. The jeweler picked it up, rolled it with his thumb up and down the channel between his first and second fingers, put it on his table and pushed it around, watching its motion, examining its color. He got up out of his chair

and walked over to the window, the pearl balanced on the points of his thumb and first two fingers. Then he turned to Martin.

"Where is the rest of it?"

"Rest of what?"

"This is a necklace pearl. Where is the rest of the necklace? These things don't travel around by themselves. Not this one, anyway."

"Do you want to buy the pearl?"

"I don't know yet. I've got to see the rest of the necklace before I make up my mind."

"Why have you?"

"Never mind. If you can produce the rest of the pearls, I may tell you. If not, you can take this one and—try to sell it!"

Martin played his trump. He drew out the necklace and laid it in the hands of Feldstein, which had suddenly appeared, as of their own volition, to receive it. He, too, laid it down and played with it, watching the highlights slide and slip over its delicate surfaces. He turned it over and over; and its soft, pink light seemed to fill the room with a glow that overlaid everything. No other object in the room was apparent in the presence of this awesome thing. Martin watched him nervously.

"Do you want it?"

"I'd just as soon buy a live cobra!"

"For the love of Mike! What's the matter with it? Ain't it real?"

"Of course it's real! It's the realest thing you ever saw! You know whose it is, I suppose?"

MARTIN nodded, choking. Of what use to deny the uncanny knowledge of these men?

"Well, so do I, and I'll prove it to you. It's Reuben Fowler's. I thought as much when I saw the first pearl, and now I know it. That's why I don't want it. Nobody wants it but Fowler. Where did you get it?"

"I found it."

"Yeh? Well, that's your business, not mine. What are you going to do with it?"

Martin wiped his forehead with the back of his hand.

"Heaven knows! Give me the damn thing, and I'll throw it in the river! I wish I'd never seen it. I can't sell it! I've tried all around, and I can't even sell one of the little pearls! It's just a little too much!"

Feldstein repeated his words, pityingly:

"One of the little pearls! Good Lord! Would you really throw it away?"

"I would, and I will, too!" Martin leaned over the desk and reached for the pearls. Quick as he was, Feldstein was quicker, and swept the necklace into the open drawer of his desk.

"Not much! Why, you fool, you don't know what you're doing! You'd be burning the temple at Persepolis!"

"Burning hell! Give me that necklace! I'll get rid of it! It's got my goat!"

"Stop it! You're rid of it right now! You leave it with me!"

Martin looked at him, not comprehending. Then one last flash of cupidity flared up in his mind.

"Nothing doing! If you sell that, I want some of it! Come across!"

He leaned over Feldstein, threatening. Feldstein sat smiling, his forefinger poised over a punch button set in the edge of his desk.

"Sit down!" his voice rang.

Martin obeyed mechanically.

"Now, listen to me. One more move like that, and you go out of here to do a nice little stretch up the river. I'm not going to sell that necklace. I couldn't sell it. Nobody could, except old man Fowler. You ought to thank me for taking it away from you. Whatever you are, you couldn't get that necklace without being pretty close to Fowler, and you better not make much of a fuss over this. They could get you too easy. I'm going to send this back to him. That's the only thing to do. If you hadn't been a rank amateur of a crook, you'd never have tried to steal this!"

"I found it!" said Martin, subdued, but fighting for honor.

"Call it anything you like. Old lady Fowler will be wearing this again inside of a week. Whatever you are to her, garbage man or what not, you'll see it

on her. Leave it here! You're a kid, playing with TNT! I'll get it back so that no one will know where it came from. I don't want to get into trouble. Now, you little boy, you drag out of this!"

Martin sighed. All his dreams of wealth and his hopes for ease and luxury had taken definite wing. With them, however, were going his fears of retribution, his sleepless nights and days of worry. He felt that he was making a profit on the deal. He shrugged his shoulders.

"All right! It beats me!"

Feldstein smiled openly and pityingly.

"Wise man! This is the first time you've tried anything like this, isn't it?"

Martin nodded.

"I thought so. I know why you couldn't get away with it, but I'm not going to tell you. You'd know too much yourself then, and you might get into trouble. You've got to learn your trade in this game just the same as you have in any other. The trouble was, you tackled an expert's job with no training. If it's any comfort to you, though, I'll tell you that no crook in the world could have pinched this"—he tapped the desk above the necklace—"and made it stick. Leave it here, and forget it. Understand? Forget it!"

Already a weight seemed lifted from Martin's soul. His bitter disappointment was salved by his relief at being rid of the horrible thing. He looked at Feldstein.

"Forgot!" he said, and left the room

TEN days, almost to the minute, after Fowler's former visit to Silas Tipping, the two men faced each other again across the table in Silas' office. Tipping held in his hand a small package wrapped in brown paper, and sealed with red sealing wax which had been allowed to cool without receiving any impression. The package was addressed to him in printed letters, and had been sent by registered mail. A return address had been printed in the upper left-hand corner, and Silas had smiled when he saw it. A vacant lot, probably. It had been mailed from a substation of the post office the day be-

fore; and Silas, after opening it, had immediately notified Reuben Fowler.

"This came to me this morning, Mr. Fowler. I have opened it, and have had it rewrapped again, just as it was, so that you might have the pleasure of opening it yourself."

He handed the package to Fowler, who looked carefully at it from all sides, while Silas watched him with a smile. Fowler broke the wax, and unwrapped the small cardboard box inside the paper. Within this box, which was one such as is used by thousands of jewelers, was folded upon fold of white tissue. This Fowler laid aside, piece by piece, and drew at last, from the depths of the box, the necklace.

He raised it slowly, noticed that it had been cut, and immediately fingered among the tissue until he found the loose pearl. Then he laid the necklace upon the table, and bent over it. He counted the pearls, found the number correct, and played with them as a miser plays with his coins. Silas watched him, a grim smile on his lips. Here was this thing, worth more than anything else of its kind in the world, but of so little economic value that the thief was forced to return it. He, too, bent over, drawn by the necklace's strange fascination, and the two old men peered over the lovely thing.

Finally, when he had drunk his fill of the sight of them, Fowler looked up, met Silas' eye, and, in an access of emotion, extended his hand. Silas shook it, heartily, realizing the tremendous burst of feeling that had prompted this enthusiasm.

"How did you do it, Mr. Tipping?"

Silas smiled.

"Mr. Fowler, I did nothing. I had as little to do with the return of the necklace as I had with its disappearance. I was merely the instrument of fate. I knew that it would come back—that was the idea about which I spoke when you told me it was gone, but I did not dare to hope that it would be returned directly to me. It is well known in the trade that you are a client of mine; and whoever returned it sent it to me merely to break the chain between himself and you. Let me have them restrung, and you can take them back to Mrs. Fowler, who will be very happy to see them, I don't doubt."

Silas rang for his pearl stringer, and gave her the necklace.

"Mrs. Fowler will be delighted," said Fowler. "She has been miserable ever since the pearls disappeared; blames herself for their loss, and so on. However, that is beside the point. I wonder how and where——"

"Don't wonder, Mr. Fowler. Remember this. There is only one Fowler necklace, and only one Reuben Fowler. The two are inseparable, as far as the jewelry trade is concerned. That is all there was to it."

Fowler nodded, comprehending.

"At any rate, I am extremely grateful to you for what you have done, and I should like very much to compensate you for your advice."

Silas shook his head with a smile.

"Don't think of it, Mr. Fowler. You and I have known each other too long to talk of rewards. The pearls would have come here, even if I had never known of their loss. Please forget all about it!"

"Very well, if you insist. I appreciate your attitude. But you cannot refuse to talk business with me, even at this time." Fowler smiled a frosty little smile, and Silas twinkled back at him. "Mrs. Fow-

ler has been miserable, perfectly miserable, over this whole affair. I want to try to make it up to her, if I can. If you can tell me of something——"

"I can, Mr. Fowler. There is an emerald which I am sure would interest you and Mrs. Fowler. I know her collection, and this stone is fine enough to take a place in it. I am sure I can lay my hands on it in the course of a day or two. I shall call you at your office, if I may, when I get it."

The pearl stringer stood in the doorway of Silas' office, the completed necklace in her hands. Silas beckoned to her, took the necklace, counted the pearls, and, after having it wrapped, delivered it to Fowler. The men rose, and Silas escorted his visitor to the door.

On his way back to the office, Silas stopped by the switchboard and talked to the pretty little operator there.

"Miss Noyes," he said, "the old fellow who said that virtue was its own reward didn't know the half of it. I'm as virtuous an old coot as you're likely to meet, and rewards cluster around me like flies around a honey pot. Now, get me Henry Frolich on the wire right away, and tell the boys to stand by for some real summer business!"



JUNGLE FOSTER PARENTS

THESE are the classic instances of Romulus and Remus, who, in Roman tradition, were cared for by a motherly wolf; and of Rudyard Kipling's Mowgli, the boy who grew up in a pack of wolves, learned their language, and dominated them by his inherent superior intelligence. From time to time come tales of this same sort of thing in real life.

Mr. Stewart Baker, an engineer in India, tells of one case he discovered. One of his employees, a native, had a baby son who had been carried off by a leopard. The cubs of the leopard had been killed, and one may infer, perhaps, that the mother leopard stole the child to take their place—possibly in retaliation, who knows? At any rate, the boy was missing for three years. Word came that a leopard, now grown old, had been killed in the forest, and the natives went out to search for her cubs. Among the cubs was the missing lad. He had become as wild and savage as any beast, and had never learned to walk on his feet, but ran around on all fours, emitting growls like the cubs that were around him. His people took him home, and it was a long time before they could train him back into human ways.

Not long ago a child was found in a cave in India, and, though no wolves were found with it, the marks of wolf tracks, the scratches on the child's body—as if it had been cuffed as an animal cuffs its cub—and the child's violent preferences in foods peculiar to wolves, make it seem certain that this was another Mowgli case.

The Gateway of the Sun



THE STORY

Boone Helms and Arapahoe Brown, after a trapping expedition in the old Southwestern Indian country, took refuge from the Indians in the fortified ranch estate of *Sieur Charles Perrault de Hautcœur*, a French nobleman who had been granted an immense tract of land in New Mexico, and who was disliked by the Americans as an airy individual who ran his ranch like a feudal manor. But *Perro* welcomed the trappers now, for he was threatened with attack by a host of Comanches under Chief *Espejo*. *Espejo* agreed not to attack if *Hautcœur* would give him his beautiful young daughter, *Luz*, in marriage. *Hautcœur* consented, but told *Espejo* to come for his bride in a year.

After the Indians departed, *Hautcœur* persuaded Boone and Arapahoe to build and man a fort outside of *The Gateway of the Sun*, the mountain pass that led to the palatial ranch house. They both disliked the Frenchman, and agreed to his proposal principally because Boone had fallen in love with *Luz*.

While the building of the fort progressed, Boone and Arapahoe managed to get in a good bit of profitable trading. And once they led the friendly Utes to victory over a band of horse-stealing Kiowas. But Boone was disappointed at not seeing more of *Luz*, who was kept immured in her father's home, *Haut Cœur*.

Then a Mormon wagon train camped near by and Arapahoe took a powerful fancy to *Honey Starbuck*, who was promised in marriage to a Mormon bishop she had never seen. He had to let her depart with the train, but saw his opportunity when a Mormon messenger came back and asked help in recovering horses and cattle stolen by the Indians. Boone and Arapahoe led the Utes in hot pursuit of the raiding Comanches, and defeated them in a thrilling fight.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BISHOP COMES TO HIS MILK.

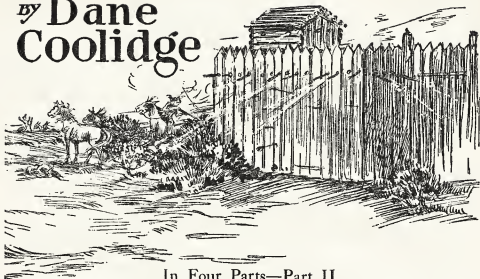
THE Utes came back singing from their long chase across the prairie, their faces smeared with black, and the scalps of the Comanches held high by exultant young warriors. But the Americans, after rounding up the horses and cattle, had

started for the Mormons' camp. The battle was over now, and all that remained was to restore the stolen stock to their owners; yet the entire war party of Utes followed along behind the herd. Boone quickly guessed the reason.

"These boys expect some beef," he suggested to Arapahoe; and the latter nodded grimly.

"Yes," he observed, "and them tight-

by Dane Coolidge



In Four Parts—Part II

Author of "Money-getter Number 45," "The Law West of the Pecos," Etc.

Espejo, the great chief of the Comanches, comes back and fights like fury for the lovely young white bride who had been promised to him by her treacherous father.

bark Mormons won't give 'em a cow, now you see. Pore folks have pore ways, and after they once git 'em back they'll fergit to mention any pay. Hyer we ride down our hawses and take a chance on gitting scalped to save these pore, suffering Saints, and I bet you my knife that old Bishop Haight don't give me a pleasant look. Howsomever, we ain't give up the cows yet." And he turned to wink wisely at his partner.

"That's a fact," admitted Boone; and Arapahoe chuckled softly.

"Leave me talk to the old walloper," he said.

They drove the cattle slowly up the valley of the Rayado, where through a beautiful green meadow a mountain stream came down, flowing close to the bluff at the north. And there in their wagon fortress the Mormons still stood at arms; for the Utes, chanting their war song, were coursing across the plain, holding aloft their fresh scalps. As the Americans approached, driving the horse herd on ahead, the Indians pressed closer, galloping their ponies back and forth to impress the timid Mormons with

their strength. Then they fell in impassively behind Arapahoe Brown and Boone, who had advanced to the entrance of the corral.

"Hyer's yo'r hawses, Mr. Haight," announced Arapahoe cheerily. "Jest open up yo'r entrance, and the boys will drive 'em in. Always glad to he'p white folks, when we can."

WOMEN and children crowded out, to stare at the scene and make room for the incoming stock; and among them Arapahoe spied the buxom Honey Starbuck, though he did not return her smile. There was, even yet, an undercurrent of hostility on the part of the Latter Day Saints; and though the bishop thanked them warmly for saving his horses and cattle, the other men, for the most part, stood silent. It was through their own negligence that the herd had been stampeded, for their cattle should have been corralled before dark; but their miraculous return was ascribed more to the bishop's prayers than to any good will of the gentiles. Yet Arapahoe drove up the horses and

shoved them into the big corral, without even hinting at pay.

"All right, folks," he said, as the Mormons, somewhat mollified, trooped out to claim their oxen. "There's yo'r hawses and hyer's yo'r cattle, and me and my men are always glad to he'p the pore emigrants. But these Injuns hyer, now—these pore, benighted Lamanites that has jest whipped hell out of the Comanches—they don't look at it quite that way. It's a custom among these Lamanites, or Utes, as we call 'em, whenever they go out and recover stolen stock, they expect a little reward."

He turned to the Utes, who had been watching him intently. Divining his request by the signs he had used, they grunted and drummed on their shields. Then, grinning expectantly, they crowded in closer; but the Mormon captain stood firm. He was a tall, bony man, with a high nose and deep-set eyes; and his clean-shaven upper lip, which was longer than most, had clamped down in a thin, forbidding line.

"Mr. Brown," he said, "we Saints are a pore people, wandering and homeless and full of tribulations. All last whiter we were snowed in, and many cattle and horses died; so we can't give these Indians anything."

"Not even one cow?" suggested Arapahoe, in wheedling tones; but the bishop and his followers shook their heads. They were indeed poor people, and their poverty had struck in until the last generous impulse was dead.

Arapahoe turned to the amazed and sullen Indians and spoke a few words in Ute; and, as their fears were confirmed, a chorus of savage yells went up from the band of warriors. Then a young chief named "Pretty" Venado jumped his horse out in front, and began an impassioned harangue. The Ute warriors yelled louder, hammering their lances against their shields, and suddenly, like one man, they leaped into a gallop, circling back in a cloud of dust.

"He says," interrupted Arapahoe, as Pretty Venado faced the Mormons, "that the Utes are not women, but warriors. All the cattle that you lost belong to the Utes, because they took them away

from the Comanches. But ff you will give them ten steers, the fattest in the bunch, they will let you keep the rest."

"What! Ten steers!" exclaimed Haight, his eyes kindling with resentment; and Arapahoe nodded his head.

"You better do it, too," he added shortly.

But the bishop failed to agree with him.

"No," he said, "the cattle are not ours. Nearly all are the property of the church. But if the Indians are hungry, they can kill that old white bull. He's too footsore to travel very far."

"You better give 'em ten," repeated Arapahoe insistently. "Them boys are hard to handle when they git their war paint on and——"

"No, sir!" broke in Haight, motioning the women and children back. "They can have that white bull, and no more. If they make us any trouble, I will send for the soldiers. One critter is all we can spare."

"He says," interpreted Arapahoe, with a wry, twisted smile, "that he will give you that old, white bull."

"Ow-wah!" yelled Pretty Venado, as the Utes, in startled silence, sat gazing at their saturnine friend; and the next instant they whirled their horses and dashed off across the flat, every man with a rope in his hand. Plunging into the herd, they scattered it right and left, and, while the Mormons looked on with cries of dismay, they caught out the fattest of the steers. Then, rounding up the rest, they started them off down the valley, and came galloping back to the wagons.

YOU tell this man," directed Pretty Venado, "this is the Indians' country. Everybody that goes through has to give us a present; but these people are no good—they gave us nothing. All right; we let them go, and the Comanches stole their cows. We whipped the Comanches and got them back. That makes them all ours. You tell him."

Arapahoe repeated the message, and turned away sulkily as the bishop frantically appealed to him for help.

"No!" he said. "I gave you yo'r

chance. Now git out of it yo'rse'f—you're so smart!"

He hooked one knee over his saddle horn while he filled and lit his pipe, and as the Mormons by signs tried to bargain with the Utes, he laughed and turned to Boone.

"Danged old billy goat!" he grumbled. "Let him do his own palaverin'. He never done nothing fur me. First time, when I rode out to meet him, he even refused to drink."

"Oh, but, Mr. Brown," protested the bishop's wife, who had been listening close by, "you can't leave us women and children to perish."

"Think not?" returned Arapahoe. "Then you don't know me, madam. I don't figger you folks are human. Shore treated me like dirt, from the start."

"But can't you go out there and explain to these Indians that we need all those oxen for our teams?"

"Yes, I can, lady," responded Arapahoe; "but I won't do it fur you, nor fur that blating old he-goat, yo'r husband. You're both mean and ornery, and so are the rest of you—all except that gal over there."

He nodded his head with an Olympian gesture toward the still-smiling Honey Starbuck; but Mrs. Haight whirled on her angrily.

"You go back, there!" she cried. "Back to the wagon, where you belong. I'll attend to this man myself."

"No, you won't!" answered back Arapahoe. "Because I won't listen to you. But if Honey Starbuck, now, would gimme a nice kiss and ask me to kinder he'p you out——"

"You shet up!" stormed the bishop's wife; and the trappers laughed heartily as Arapahoe made a wry face.

"Shet up, yo'rse'f," he retorted, and went on smoking, while the Mormons begged and haggled with the Utes. They were talking by signs, with a few words of Spanish, and Bishop Haight had offered Pretty Venado five steers, which had been most insultingly refused. Pretty Venado then, in turn, had offered to restore one yoke of oxen for each of the emigrants' wagons, and in an ecstasy of despair the Mormon captain was mak-

ing signs to show that one team could not pull them.

But the Indians, from his silence, judged that Arapahoe Brown in some way approved of their actions; and every minute with greater insolence they rejected the Mormon offers, until at last the bishop gave up.

"Mr. Brown," he appealed, "won't you talk to these Indians and explain what a plight we are in?"

"Why, certainly," responded Arapahoe; "but not fur you, Mr. Haight, because you treated me like dirt from the first. They's only one person in the whole danged caravan that's give me a pleasant look. That's Honey Starbuck, and yo'r wife, hyer, has refused to let me see her."

"Why—what's this?" demanded the captain, turning inquiringly to his wife.

Mrs. Haight blazed forth indignantly:

"He said if she'd kiss him and ask him to help us, he might use his influence with the chief; but I told her to go back and stay in the wagon. What would Bishop Harney say?"

"Never mind about him!" spoke up Arapahoe resentfully. "He's got two wives already, and mebbe more, back in Utah; but me, my tepee is empty."

"Let her come out and ask him!" decided Haight, after a minute. "But remember," he said to Arapahoe, "Miss Starbuck is promised. I'm responsible to the president for her care."

"Yes, and you're responsible," retorted Arapahoe, "for the lives of these women and children; and don't you never think you can fool me. I know you and I hate you, you blathering old hypocrite, so you might as well come to yo'r milk. Send her out hyer, by grab, and let me talk to her a minute. I'll settle this business, right now."

HE glanced back at his companions and at the watchful Utes, and settled himself for his coup. The time had come when the Mormons were in his power, and he waited impatiently for Honey. She came out submissively, listening absently to Mrs. Haight, who poured a stream of words into her ear; but at sight of Arapahoe, like a king

among his minions, she looked away and blushed.

"What is it you want?" she asked at last; and Arapahoe fixed his eyes on the group of hostile Mormons who were gathered about their chief.

"You stay where you are, you Mormons," he threatened, and beckoned her off to one side. "Gimme that kiss first," he demanded; and, after a moment of startled silence, Honey offered her ruby lips. He kissed them tenderly, yet with such a lover's rapture that poor Honey, despite their audience, burst into tears and kissed him again.

"That's enough," announced Arapahoe, smiling down into her eyes; and, still holding her by the hand, he strode back to the Indians and jabbered forth a torrent of Ute. Pretty Venado made reply, glancing back over his shoulder at the line of grinning warriors, and Arapahoe turned to the Mormons.

"They say," he said, "that *Tato* Brown is their father. What he speaks are good words with them. They say the cattle are mine, to give back if I wish—but you Mormons ain't treated me right. Now, I want to know right now what you're going to give to *me*, if I git all them cattle back; and, jest as a suggestion, I might mention that Honey Starbuck done told me that she likes me fine."

He swung up into his saddle with a quick, mocking smile; and Bishop Haight took a sudden step forward.

"Miss Starbuck!" he cried, aghast. "She's promised to Bishop Harney. You ain't a member of our faith."

"No, I know," answered Arapahoe; "but how would it suit you to git back all but ten of them steers? These Utes are my children, and you've got to feed an Injun or he's liable, by grab, to stick a knife into you. So think it over, bishop, and don't think too long, like you did them other two times."

"They can have the ten steers," responded the Mormon captain quickly; and Arapahoe turned and shouted to the Utes. Then, reining his horse in a sudden circle, he scattered the Mormons in every direction, and picked up Honey with one swoop of his arm.

"All right, folks," he said. "I'll jest

take Honey along! Thanking you, one and all, for yo'r kindness."

He kissed her again as his horse, ridden double, lowered its head and offered to buck; then, hooking him with his spurs, he was off at a gallop, while he looked back over his shoulder and laughed.

CHAPTER X.

THE DISTANT STAR.

THE stars were shining brightly when Arapahoe Brown and his bride returned from their honeymoon at Taos, but, as he thundered at the gate and the trappers threw it open, there was no star half so bright as Honey's eyes. Old Rock came rushing out and leaped up against them, and Boone lit a big fire in the living room; and while Arapahoe hustled about, attending to the comfort of his wife, Honey sat down by the fireplace and smiled.

"It's nice to have a home," she observed to the trappers who made up the garrison of the fort. "My folks died when I was little, so I never had one—till now." And she looked around the big room proudly. "That's why I joined the Mormons," she went on, as no one answered. "They told me they'd give me a home."

"Well, you got one!" said Arapahoe, as he strode in from the court with wedding gifts under both arms. "Don't this beat Brigham City and that bald-headed old bishop? Hyer's yo'r fiddle—now play us a tune."

He passed over the violin that he had bought for her at Taos, and Honey tuned it up dreamily.

"I'll play 'Home, Sweet Home,'" she said at last; and they listened in reverent silence.

"Now play 'Old Zip Coon,'" prompted the irrepressible Arapahoe; but Honey shook her head.

"Not now, Arapahoe," she answered gently. "I'll sing you 'Old Folks at Home.'"

She lowered the fiddle to the crook of her arm, just as she had in the circle of wagons; and as song after song poured forth from her lips, Arapahoe wiped away a tear.

"Ain't she wonderful, boys?" he murmured, as the music came to an end and Honey rose to go. "They ain't many gals like her, and I shore feel religious when I think how I might've lost her. But to-morrow night, fellers, when we're all settled down and the floor has been scraped for a dance—there'll be nothing played then but 'The Arkansas Traveler,' 'Old Zip Coon,' and 'Honey in the Gourd.' This hyer fort is going to be a real home to all of us, but Honey is tired to-night."

He escorted her to her room, and tipped back to the big room, where the trappers were waiting expectantly.

"Come on, boys," he whispered, brandishing a bottle of French brandy: "drink hearty to the blushing bride. And the first wagon train that comes through, take my advice and git a wife, if you have to go out and steal one."

He slapped them on the shoulders and went off grinning, leaving the bottle to lighten their hearts; but far into the night Boone sat brooding by the fire, for Luz was as distant as the stars. At the news of their battle with the Comanches, Hautcœur had come riding to exhort them to greater vigilance and to beg Boone to hire more men. For the Comanches were vengeful, and the band which they had vanquished would carry the news to Espejo.

The old dread of the Comanches, which had driven him to build Boone's fort and garrison it with hardy Americans, had laid hold once more on the high-hearted Frenchman, and his house had become a prison to Luz. No longer could she ride forth in the lumbering old coach, with outriders to guard against attack. They had thrown down the gauntlet to the ruthless Comanches, and Hautcœur feared the cunning of Espejo. He was a man whose goings and comings were like the rush of the prairie wind, and all was made secure against the storm.

But if Hautcœur feared the Comanches, the victorious Utes did not, and, after a "scalp dance" over their trophies, Pretty Venado and his warriors scoured the plains to the banks of the Canadian. Other Utes came riding

in from the mountains to the west, eager to join in the war and hunt buffalo on the prairies, whence so often they had fled in defeat. And at their head rode *Tato* Boone, who had come down from heaven on a rainbow, bearing the medicine of the white man's god. But Boone knew in his heart that when Espejo's warriors came, the Utes would flee to the hills.

Every evening before sundown the horse herd was brought up and confined within the high-walled corral, and, as the first emigrants came through with accounts of bloody attacks, the garrison of trappers was increased. But the presence of the fort, with its high walls to give them shelter, tempted the wagon trains to camp and recoup; and, as caravan after caravan pulled in at the crossing, even Hautcœur overcame his fear. Here were hundreds of frontiersmen, trained in Indian warfare and armed with the best of weapons.

INSIDE the fort Honey Brown pursued her duties as if Comanches did not exist. Within a week after her coming every room had been swept and cleared, the courtyard had been cleared and made neat; and where Arapahoe and his companions had squatted like Indians there were homemade tables and chairs. Bedsteads had been framed and stretched with thongs of rawhide, and the overloaded emigrants had been glad to exchange odd furniture for credit at Arapahoe's store.

There was a whatnot in the corner, a huge mirror against the wall, an old-fashioned hair sofa in the living room; but though she labored day and night fitting up her new-found home, Honey found a greater work to her hand. With the wounded and sick she had the magic touch one attributed to ancient kings, and the news of some sick woman or child in the wagons sent her flying to offer her services. Every morning outside the gate the Indian women gathered, peeping in with eager eyes, until she saw the swaddled babies that they held up, invoking her aid. Then the Mexicans, always ailing, came to beg for pills and medicine to cure their ailments.

And at last the guarded coach of Señora Hautcœur drew up before her door.

But the señora, who was justly proud of her *sangre azul*, the blue blood which had come from old Spain, did not mention her afflictions until the formal call was made which recognized Mrs. Brown as her neighbor. The new home was inspected, and Honey's furniture admired and praised; the health of her husband and his partner, Boone, were inquired after with meticulous solicitude. Then, as her own family was alluded to, she mentioned most politely that Luz was far from well.

"Not well?" repeated Honey. "Why, what is the matter with your daughter? Couldn't I come up, Mrs. Hautcœur, and look at her? You wouldn't believe how many patients I have, and nearly all are getting well!"

"If you will be so kind," bowed the señora, her sad face lighting up, "I should like very much to have you come."

So it came that Honey Brown, who had come through in a covered wagon, was driven in a coach with four outriders and a postilion to the gates of forbidden Haut Cœur. She glanced about curiously as she entered the secluded patio, exclaiming with delight at the flaunting rows of hollyhocks, admiring the speckled-backed chickens; but when she saw a girl, gazing shyly around the corner, and learned that she was the *enfirma*, she hurried with outstretched hands to take her into her arms and inquire what it was that made her ill.

Hours passed at the fort, and then Honey came back, beckoning Boone and Arapahoe to her room.

"I declare!" she exclaimed. "To think of that poor child! And her father has promised her to an Indian! No wonder she's so peaked and ready to cry—she's afraid this Espejo will come back."

She glanced accusingly at Arapahoe and then at Boone.

"Why didn't you tell me?" she demanded, "about these terrible Comanches? She says they come by thousands and thousands. And only last month Espejo sent her a present—but she threw it out the window."

"Well, now, Honey," expostulated Arapahoe, "no use causing you to be worried, jest because these danged Injuns are around. Of co'se, they're coming back, but you wait till we git our cannon, if them freighters ever bring it out. Boone and me and the boys hyer can whip off the whole Comanche nation. You ain't skeered, air ye, inside this fort?"

"No, of course not," she answered impatiently; "but, oh, I'm so scared for her! And she told me that Boone offered to fight the Comanche chief, only her father wouldn't even hear of it!"

"It turned out," explained Arapahoe, "the old man was short of powder. He knowed, if we started a fight, we wouldn't last no time—that's why he made that promise to the chief."

"And didn't he intend to keep it? This little Luz is so worried! Because she thinks, when the Indians came back, her father will give her up—and, if he does, she's going to kill herself!"

"Ah, no, no!" exclaimed Arapahoe. "That was his French way of gitting himse'f out of a tight corner. His breed have got a name of never keeping their word to no one, and he jest made a fool out of Espejo. While they was out there talking, Pete Warlemount broached the liquor and got the whole Injun camp drunk. Then the Kiowas fought the Comanches, and they all got so paralyzed that Espejo had to take 'em away."

"Poor child," mourned Honey, "with a father like that! And her mother like a picture of death—she says she ain't slept for months. But little Luz did say, before I came away, she was glad you and Boone were down here; and, if her father will let her, she's coming down to-morrow, to look through the fort and all."

"Yes—and *all!*" repeated Arapahoe, bursting into a loud guffaw, and slapping Boone violently on the back; and after one swift glance, Honey's face suddenly changed, and she pushed her whooping husband out the door.

"You git out of here!" she cried, "and don't you come back." Then, turning to Boone, she held out both hands, and looked at him with round, smiling eyes.

"So that's the way it is?" she observed, nodding wisely; and Boone met her gaze and blushed. "Well, you go away," she said, "and leave it to me. But I think that Mr. Hautcœur is a cruel, inhuman brute, to promise his little daughter to an Indian. And all she talked about, almost, after her mother went away, was how brave you and Arapahoe were. She asked me all about you; but you run along now, because I want to be alone and think."

She pushed him gently out the door; and Boone went away comforted, for at last he had a friend at court.

Three days dragged by with no visit from Luz to gladden his weary eyes, and then, from the gun tower, Boone saw the Hautcœur coach and four trundling majestically through The Gateway of the Sun. Four outriders, heavily armed, rode ahead and behind the carriage; a postilion bestrode the near leader; and on the box the old coachman held a crate between his feet as he drew up before the portals of the fort. He opened the door; and the señora stepped forth, her face set like a tragic mask; then behind her, while all watched, the beautiful Luz peeped out before she smiled and leaped to the ground.

One swift look had revealed to her her champion of the siege, gazing over the parapet of the tower; but, though she smiled on all alike and patted old Rock's head, she did not look up again. The ladies passed in, to carry on in convent English the forms and ceremonies of a call, while the hospitable Arapahoe beckoned the servants into the bar and set out a round of drinks. But on the roof Boone waited, though he knew not for what; and presently the coachman took the crate from his box and carried it into the court. It contained twelve speckled-back chickens, a present from the señora; and Honey ran to see them turned out.

"Oh, isn't this just like home!" she exclaimed again and again, as they scattered about the court; and then, as Boone looked down, he heard a quick step behind him, and Luz came running up the stairs. She halted as he faced her, and gazed at him doubtfully,

her eyes as radiant as twin stars; then shyly she held out her hand, like some fair lady of old, and he took it for a moment in his. There was a bustle below, the sound of her mother calling, and, with a last friendly nod, she darted away down the stairway, leaving Boone almost daring to hope. She was still a nobleman's daughter, still as distant as the stars, but she had sought him out and given him her hand.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MARTIN POLE.

FROM his post on the gun tower Boone watched the ponderous coach as it carried his fairy princess away, then, with a last rapturous glance toward The Gateway of the Sun, he hurried down to help Honey with her chickens. They were running to and fro, peering into the darkened doorways as if seeking some place to hide; and even the crumbs of bread which she cast temptingly before them did not hold their attention for long.

"They're afraid!" cried Honey. "See that pretty little rooster looking up into the sky for some hawk? Oh, I know as sure as anything they'll catch some of my darling chickens; because I see one flying around up there."

"Aw, them's jest prairie hawks," answered Arapahoe scornfully. "What do they know about speckled-back chickens? Let 'em fly if they want to; the first one that comes down hyer will run into a bullet from this six-shooter!"

He slapped his pistol boastfully, meanwhile keeping a watchful eye on a falcon that was circling the fort; but hardly had he retired to wait on a customer when he heard a loud scream from Honey.

"Oh, he got one!" she cried, running to shoo the rest inside. "He came right down and snatched him before I could raise a hand—and now he'll come back for the rest. That's the way they always do, and I just love chickens! It makes me feel like back home, in Mis-sour."

"We'll build you a cage, then," suggested the crestfallen Arapahoe. "Or a

big coop, over in that corner. But I cain't stay hyer with a gun all the time—some one has got to tend that store."

"But I want to see them running around," exclaimed Honey tearfully, "and coming to scratch around the door! That's jest the way it was at our old home back in Missoura—I can't bear to have them cooped up."

"Well, there you are," observed Arapahoe to Boone. "If I stay hyer and herd them chickens, who's going to tend the bar? And if I don't—Hyer's my Honey gal, crying!"

He put his arm about her consolingly, while Boone, armed with his rifle, went up on the roof to stand watch. But as he sat there patiently, he saw a kingbird on a cottonwood rise up and make a swoop at a hawk. The hawk faltered and changed its course, beating its wings and flapping higher to escape the savage blows on its head; until at last the valiant kingbird came back to its accustomed perch, above its nest in the crotch of the tree. There, preening its feathers and leaping up to snap at insects, it twittered and basked in the sun, until another hawk, flying close, invited its slashing attack and fluttered off in ignominious defeat.

"I've got it!" announced Boone, running down into the courtyard, where Honey was still bemoaning her loss. "I'll build you a martin pole."

"What's that?" inquired Honey and Arapahoe, both at once; but Boone Helms only laughed.

"You wait," he said; "you Missourians don't know everything. Back in Kentucky, where I came from, all the people had martin poles."

He ran and got a forked pole, which the builders had left, and set it up like a flagstaff in the court; then, finding a crook-necked gourd, such as they used for dippers, he hollowed it out so that it could be used for a nest.

"There's my pole," he said, "and out yonder in the grove is the martin that's going to live on it. I've been watching him for an hour, fighting the hawks away from his nest, and we'll get him to guard Honey's chickens."

"What! One martin?" cried Honey.

"What can one little bird do against hundreds and hundreds of hawks?"

"You don't know them," smiled Boone. "One martin can whip an eagle. He's the bravest bird in the world. If I were as brave as that little *correcuervo*, I wouldn't need these trappers at all."

"No, you'd jest go out lone-handed," observed Arapahoe sarcastically, "and lick the Comanches yo'rse'f!"

"Well, I would," asserted Boone; "and I sure hate to rob his nest, because Mr. Crow-chaser is going to be my medicine bird. When I go out after these Comanches, I'll just take one of his feathers along, to make my heart brave, like his."

HE grinned quizzically at Arapahoe and at the group of trappers; and, as he went out of the gate with the gourd in his hand, they glanced at each other in silence.

"Did ye hear that?" inquired Arapahoe. "That boy is an Injun. Been with 'em so long he believes all that foolishness, jest like I kinder do myse'f."

He strode out the gate.

Boone climbed the cottonwood and stuffed the martin's nest into his gourd; then, as the parent birds flew down at him and pursued him across the flat, he returned and set the gourd on the pole. From within the round hole which he had cut in the side, the young nestlings set up a clamorous outcry, and, after fluttering above it, the mother at last flew down and lit on the edge of the opening. Then, as the father settled beside her, she crept in and covered her little ones, while Honey burst forth admiringly.

"There's a bird for you!" said Boone proudly, as the father *correcuervo* took his perch on the stem of the gourd. "Now you wait till some hawk or eagle comes by, and watch the feathers fly."

"And when he tears one out from some old eagle," inquired Arapahoe, "are you going out there to pick it up fur medicine?"

"You bet ye!" responded Boone. "And I won't have to wait long. He's sure on the warpath, right now."

The crow chaser, snapping angrily, rose up from his perch as a hawk dashed

swiftly by; and the next day, when an eagle stooped to strike among the chickens, the *correcuervo* met him in mid-air. There was a smash as the yellow warrior flung himself at the eagle's head, and then, with desperate fury, he seemed to cling to the great bird's back as he pelted him down toward the ground. Twice the eagle swerved aside to avoid the rain of blows, and then, bewildered and battered, he plunged into a growth of oaks and took shelter like a rabbit in the brush. But one golden plume came floating to earth, and Boone ran out laughing to catch it.

"My brother!" he said in Ute, holding it up to the returning crow chaser. Arapahoe nodded solemnly.

"I knowed it," he said. "That boy is plumb Injun. But he's got good medicine, at that."

Boone had indeed watched his medicine bird with the reverence of an Indian, who sees in every creature a brother in different mold, capable of imparting his own spirit and strength. He had waited with Indian patience for the moment to come when some eagle from the crags would descend on Honey's chickens, and now he laid the plume against his breast. Proudest of birds and lord of the air, the eagle had yielded to the spirit which animated the valiant little crow chaser; and now, defeated, he lay hiding in the brush, while the *correcuervo* flew triumphantly home.

With a twitter of delight he settled down on the crook-necked gourd, which was turned upward to afford him a perch, and as Boone called him brother he fluffed out his feathers and gave utterance to his low, querulous song. His golden-yellow breast gleamed opulently in the sun, and, while he searched the sky for hawks, he snapped insects from the air to feed to his clamorous brood. It was to protect them, his little ones, that he had flown against the eagle, and in his heart there was no room for fear.

"My brother!" said Boone again, and gazed off across the plains, where any day the Comanches might appear. They were the eagles of the prairie, and up the canyon at Haut Cœur reposed the woman for whom he fought. Luz was

her name, which in Spanish means "light," and to him she was the light of the world. From the summit of the tower at break of day, when the sun shone in through the gate, he could catch the white gleam of the highest turrets of Haut Cœur, where she whom he loved hid in fear. But when the Comanches came, and eagle-eyed Espejo, he would chase them as his medicine bird chased the eagles.

AS the fame of Honey's doctoring had spread to the Ute encampment and then through the Mexicans to Haut Cœur, so the story of Boone Helms and his medicine bird was carried to the ears of Luz. For the Indians, ever inquisitive, had witnessed the planting of the martin pole and the moving of the *correcuervo* to his gourd; and when Boone had picked up the plume from the eagle's back, the story had swept through the camp.

Boone, Rainbow Boy, had won new war medicine; and the bird who had given it to him now dwelt in the fort, to protect Honey's chickens. And many times a day Boone approached the pole to invoke the warrior spirit of his medicine bird. He spoke to him in Ute, calling him "brother" and "little friend," and the bird scolded back and flew down at him. Pretty Venado came first, to invite Boone to take the warpath, but for once he shook his head. His medicine had told him to stay at the fort, and he lingered, looking often toward Haut Cœur.

At last the great coach came rumbling down the canyon, and drew up with a flourish at the fort; and in the front the coachman had a box of rooted hollyhocks, to make Honey's patio brighter. The señora stepped out with a flaming bouquet of flowers; and behind her, no longer wan, but laughing and gay, came Luz, the one-time *enferma*.

"Ah, my friend!" exclaimed Señora Hautcœur, as Honey came to meet them. "How can I thank you enough for your wonderful cure of my daughter? Is she not well and blooming now, like these flowers which I bring you? And we owe it all to you, I know!"

She presented the bouquet with a Latin bow and embrace; and as Honey glanced at Luz she intercepted a beaming smile, and spied Boone in the gateway behind.

"Ever since we came to visit you," ran on the señora complacently, "my daughter has been a changed girl; only now she must always go abroad. So, hearing from our servants of the little *correcuervo* which you have trained to protect your chickens, we have come down to call and see if the tales are true—and to get one, perhaps, ourselves."

"The stories *are* true," replied Honey. "Our little crow chaser is wonderful. Only, to hear the real story, you must talk to Mr. Helms, because he is the one who did it."

She turned as she ushered them in to where Boone was standing; and, for the first time since the siege, the haughty señora condescended to recognize his existence. She had thanked him then for offering to defend them; but to her, then as now, he was only a nameless American, and she eyed him coldly as she bowed. But the remembrance, perhaps, of that terrible hour came back to her as she scanned his face; for suddenly her voice was kind.

"Ah, yes," she said, "I remember Don Boone. And are you Americans so smart," she went on archly, "that you train even the birds to fight your battles? Then you must show me and my daughter the little bird on his pole. Is it best to go up on the roof?"

Boone nodded, struck dumb by the attentions of this lady, who had heretofore watched over her daughter like a Gorgon; and, as they went up the stairs, he contrived to fall back and offer the blushing Luz his hand. She seemed so dainty and aloof in her black-velvet gown and the large hat with its flowing plume, but as he helped her up the stairs, she glanced at him mischievously, and as suddenly broke into a smile. A little curl in front of one ear nodded coquettishly in the breeze, her turned-up nose seemed to mock him; but he had waited too long for a word from her lips to allow himself to suffer doubt.

"We are glad," he said gallantly, "to

see you well again. My little medicine bird is honored by your coming."

"Perhaps," she answered slyly, "it is the bird that has cured me. Because I swear I took none of the medicine."

"What?" cried her mother, who had been listening unseen; but, after a quick glance at Luz, she turned back to Honey, who was pointing out the martin on his pole.

"Oh, what a beautiful little creature!" she exclaimed in a sudden rapture. "And how American it is to move him from his tree and use him to fight off the hawks! My husband is quite pleased at the way in which Don Boone has induced the cowardly Utes to fight."

"He goes out with them!" defended Honey. "And Arapahoe goes, too. That is why the Indians fight."

"Oh!" said the señora, and fell silent; for Hautcœur did not go with *his* men.

"I just wish," went on Honey, "an old hawk would come by. We haven't lost a chicken since Boone put up his pole." And while she ran on, she drew the señora down beside her, to await the chance coming of some hawk. Luz nestled down dutifully by the side of her mother, but, as the talk of the two women became more earnest and confidential, she turned and glanced meaningly at Boone. Then, springing up childishly to look over the wall, she came back to where he stood.

"You are so solemn, my *correcuervo*," she spoke up jestingly. "Is it for me and my little sister that you fight off the Comanches, or is it to guard your own nest?"

"I fight like my medicine bird," Boone responded gravely, "because it is in my heart. All my people were fighting men; but since I have seen you I am braver than ever before."

"Indeed?" She bowed, with a sudden, pleased smile. "Then all us little chickens are safe. But tell me about your bird—do you talk to him, as they say, or is it all done for a joke? I have heard that the Indians believe you came down from heaven, and call you 'Rain-bow Boy.'"

"And where else did I come from?" inquired Boone unsmilingly. "Don't ba-

bies come from heaven? That is what my mother told me, and she ought to know; so that is what I told the Utes."

"You Americans," observed Luz, "are very, very smart; but I like you, all the same. You are also very brave, but more like the eagle than that poor little bird on the pole."

"There is another bird," suggested Boone, with a new ardor in his glance, "that is smaller than even my crow chaser. The smallest and most beautiful of all, yet she is able to kill an eagle."

"And what bird is that?" she asked after a pause; and as their eyes met she glanced away.

"The *chuparosa*," he answered softly, "which lives by sipping roses and drinking in the sweetness of flowers; yet, when she flies against the eagle and strikes it under its wing, she pierces its heart, and it dies."

"But the humming-bird——" she began, and then she stopped short. "I must go to my mother," she murmured. "And yet—it is all very nice. You love all the birds, do you not?"

"Yes," he responded; "but—but the *chuparosa* most. Your mother is looking, now."

"Never mind," she said resentfully; "I will be like that humming-bird, for once. There is something I wish to ask, and to do so I must be brave. What will you do when Espejo comes back?"

The fresh beauty of her cheeks was drained away as she spoke, and as she faced him anxiously, Boone saw grief in her staring eyes and a haggard, haunting fear. It was as if the very name of Espejo had made her broken and old.

"I will fight, if your father will let me," he answered. "But he has told me to wait for the signal."

"And what is that?" she demanded intently.

"When he fires the big cannon the second time. Until then, we are not to shoot."

"Do—do you think," she faltered, "that my father will give me up? I cannot sleep, I cannot rest, for one thing he said: 'It is better that one should suffer than——'"

"No, no," broke in Boone; "he will never give you up. But when he refuses, Espejo will fight."

"And then—then!" cried Luz. "When the Indians come by thousands! Will my father give me up, then?"

"I have told him," evaded Boone, "to bring you to the fort. Haut Cœur is too big—the walls are too low——"

"But he will not!" she burst out. "He keeps me shut up like a slave. And if I escape from this Indian, I must marry some man in France—some man I never saw."

"Marry me," said Boone impulsively, "and I will protect you." He drew back, aghast, astounded at the boldness of his words; but Luz had not taken offense.

"If I come, will you help me?" she demanded.

"Yes, yes," he responded, "but——"

"I am afraid," she whispered piteously, "that I know my father now. And if Espejo comes again——"

"I will protect you," promised Boone; but he would not meet her eyes, for her own fear had clutched at his heart. When the Comanches came, how could one man turn them back? And Haut-cœur was not made of iron.

CHAPTER XII.

THE "BRIDE PONY."

AS if for a sign of peace, no hawk or questing eagle swooped down on Honey Brown's brood; and the king-bird, fluffing his crest, sat basking in the sun until the señora rose to go. But never for long could there be peace in that land whose inhabitants lived wholly for war; and, as they gazed off across the prairie, they heard shrill, distant yells, and a war party of Utes rode in. They bore scalps on their spear shafts, but their loud, triumphant shouts were mingled with wails for the dead, and as the women in the encampment caught the sound of the death chant, they burst into wild lamentations.

"What a terrible country!" exclaimed the señora, clasping her hands. "And yet we must live here—always!"

She shuddered as the Indian women rent the air with their wailing, and, as

Luz turned back for a last look at Boone, she plucked her roughly away.

"Come, come," she said. "Carlos will scold if we are late." And, barely bowing in farewell, she hurried out to the coach and drove back through The Gateway of the Sun.

Days passed, and a fresh tide of emigrants swept in, bringing tales of attacks on the plains; and then, with a fanfare of trumpets, a troop of cavalry rode in and drew up before the fort. They were fresh from Fort Leavenworth, their blue uniforms, trimmed with yellow, scarcely faded by the rain and sun; and at their head, his eyes fixed severely to the front, rode a captain who was new to them all. He was a short, thick-set man, with the high, hooked nose that is so often the mark of a fighter; but his mouth was small and twisted, and his eyes, as he faced the fort, showed entirely too much of the whites. Arapahoe, a bottle of whisky in his pocket, had advanced to extend the hospitalities, but, after one swift glance, he stepped back abruptly. In horses and men alike he associated that white-eyed stare with some form or devilment or trouble.

As the column halted, the captain sat in silence while the file closers straightened the lines; then, when each man and horse was in perfect alignment, he advanced with his sergeant toward the crowd.

"Is Mr. Brown here—and Mr. Helms?" he inquired; and Boone and Arapahoe stepped forth.

"I am Captain Gildersleeve," announced the officer, "and I have been ordered to investigate certain complaints lodged against you by emigrants at Fort Hancock."

"Why—what complaints is that?" stammered the dumfounded Arapahoe; and the captain nodded to his sergeant, who drew a paper from under his belt.

"The captain of an emigrant train," he read, "passing through Fort Hancock, reports that he was surrounded in a threatening manner by Ute Indians, led by white men from Fort Boone. After seizing his cattle and horses, they made off with ten fat steers. And a woman from the train named Honey

Starbuck was kidnaped and carried away by force."

"It's a dad-blasted lie!" blared out Arapahoe, leaping forward; but the captain held up his hand.

"Is the woman here?" he demanded austere; and Arapahoe turned white and stepped back.

"Why—why, yes," he stammered, "but——"

"Bring her out!" ordered the captain peremptorily.

"Bring her out, eh?" repeated Arapahoe, with a vengeful curl of the lip. "Say, who do you think you're talking to? They ain't men enough in the whole army to take my wife away. And if you're going to take the word of a lying Mormon bishop against a loyal American citizen, you can go plumb to hell, sez I!"

"Do you deny," inquired the captain, "that you kidnaped this woman?"

"I certainly do!" answered Arapahoe. "She was kidnaped by them danged Mormons, to be the third wife of a bishop. But I sparked her, coming through—only they wouldn't let her go—so I went down, by grab, and took her! We was married over at Taos, and I've got the papers to prove it. Ain't that so, Honey?" he called over his shoulder.

"It shore is!" responded Honey, stepping out to stand beside him; but the captain regarded her doubtfully.

"Make a note of that," he said to the sergeant. "Now, what about these ten stolen steers?"

"Well, I'll tell you, now," began Arapahoe, his rugged face beaming triumphantly, "them Mormons never told it all. They was a trifling, pore-sperited lot, and while they was camped over at Rayado, the Comanches run off all their stock. They sent a man on foot to ask us fur he'p, and we got a bunch of Utes and tuk after them Comanches and jest about wiped 'em out. Then we rounded up their cattle and druv 'em back to where they was parked, and the Utes asked for ten steers, for beef.

"Now, according to prairie law, them cattle was all ours, because the Comanches had got 'em and the danged cowardly Mormons was afraid to leave

their wagons. But, being as the Injuns had put 'em afoot, and their women and children were along, we went out our own selves, killed twenty-seven Comanches, and brought back all that stock. Ain't that so, Honey? Didn't we, now?"

"You shore did!" answered Honey proudly.

"Well, sir," went on Arapahoe, "that old Bishop Haight wouldn't give them Utes one cow. So they went out, by grab, and tuk the whole herd, and he was danged glad to git off with ten. Then I picked up Honey, hyer, who was snuggling up against me and making eyes fit to kill——"

"You shut up!" reproved Honey, as soldiers and men burst out laughing.

The captain whirled his horse.

"Silence in the ranks!" he shouted, and, as his eyes swept the line, there fell a silence like death.

"Sergeant," he ordered, "make a note of their defense. But I wish to warn you, Brown and Helms, that the emigrants on this trail are under the protection of the army."

"Yes, major," responded Arapahoe meekly.

"And, furthermore," went on Gildersleeve, "it is not the policy of the government to encourage the Indians to depredate."

"I understand you, colonel," replied Arapahoe.

"And, in the future, any attempts at extortion from emigrants will be dealt with most severely."

"Yes, general," bowed Arapahoe; and, as the sarcasm penetrated, Captain Gildersleeve heard more laughter from the ranks. He turned in his saddle, but every soldier's face was as fixed as graven stone.

"I have been informed," went on Gildersleeve, after an interval of silence, "that the settlers about Cimarron Crossing are in need of military protection. What is your opinion, Mr. Helms?"

"Protection—hell!" exploded Arapahoe. "If we depended on you soldiers, we'd all be scalped, long ago. The Utes are our amigos, and we can whip off the Comanches without any he'p from you.

But you might go up the canyon and talk to Hautcœur—he's expecting a call from Espejo."

"Espejo?" repeated Gildersleeve.

Arapahoe nodded.

"He's their war chief," he added succinctly, and regarded the captain pityingly. For, with all his officiousness, this martinet from the East had never even heard the name, yet with his troop of sixty men he offered military protection to the settlers along the Cimarron. But when bold Espejo came with his thousands of seasoned warriors—Arapahoe turned away in disgust.

"You can camp hyer if you want to," he called back over his shoulder; but the gray-horse troop marched on.

THEIR welcome at Haut Cœur was, perhaps, pleasing to the vanity of Captain Gildersleeve, for the word soon came that Hautcœur had taken him in and quartered his men on the plaza. Then, as troopers on leave or out exercising their mounts dropped in at Boone's fort for a drink, the rumor spread and grew that the captain and Luz Hautcœur were more and more together every day. The scouting and company drills became more and more perfunctory, as the gallant captain pressed his suit; and then a courtier came riding from Fort Hancock with orders for them to depart.

It was daylight when the bugles and the rumbling of supply wagons gave notice that the gray-horse troop passed, and from his lookout in the gun tower Boone watched grimly as they jogged by and turned toward the south. They were gone, then, these men in blue whose presence had lulled Hautcœur to security; and Espejo and his warriors were reported far to the east, raiding the wagon trains at the crossing of the Arkansas. For Espejo had less fear of the government's soldiers than he had of the hunters of the plains; and more than once, to show his scorn, he had charged and routed them, in the uneven warfare he carried on.

Wagon train after wagon train had been cut up and annihilated as the summer waned toward its close, and now,

as the buffalo began to move south for the fall, the Big Bend became a veritable battle ground. Freight wagons and mail coaches were looted and burned, parties of hide hunters were killed on the plains; while Espejo, rallying his warriors for a last defense of their hunting grounds, drew a dead line along the banks of the Arkansas. One battle after the other showed the Indians in greater numbers, and the soldiers more inadequate for their task; and at last the flow of emigrants from the East was cut off, and only the guarded mail coaches went through. But at Boone's fort there was peace, and the Utes scouted in vain—every Comanche, every Kiowa, was gone.

Twice that summer, as freight caravans passed through, returning empty to Westport on the Missouri, Hautcœur had arranged to send his daughter to France; but each time he had held back, and each time he had been glad, for both of the wagon trains had been burned. The freighters and passengers had been killed or taken prisoners, and it came over Hautcœur that Espejo and his warriors had had foreknowledge of all that he planned. Yet it was not too late to send Luz to Fort Hancock and thence under escort to Santa Fe, but a sudden doubt as to the good faith of Gildersleeve had deterred Hautcœur again.

Days passed, and, while he waited, Luz sent Boone a red rose. Then, as Hautcœur mustered his men to escort her to Santa Fe, there came a drumming of horses' hoofs by night. In the morning a beautiful pony stood tied before his gate—the Indian offering to a father for his daughter. Espejo had returned, to claim his promised bride; and the valley was swarming with Comanches.

CHAPTER XIII.

A WINTER HATE.

AT Boone's fort the thunder of Hautcœur's cannon at dawn sent the garrison rushing to the roof, and there, through their field glasses, they beheld the beleaguered house and the bride pony tied at the gate. But the second gun,

which was to summon their aid, did not follow the warning discharge. From the corral in hot haste they had brought out their horses, and Boone's war whoop had assembled the Utes; but, though they stood waiting to mount and ride, the sun rose an hour high, and still the expected summons did not come. Then, with a heart-wrenching curse, Arapahoe shouted from the roof that Hautcœur had taken in the horse.

Running up from his place at the head of the Utes, Boone snatched away the telescope and fixed his gaze on the accursed house, that seemed to harbor so much perfidy and hate. Espejo's offering had been accepted, and the gates of Haut Cœur stood open, as if for a friend.

"He's trying to trap him!" cried Boone, in a voice that trembled and choked; "he's trying to get Espejo inside. You don't think he would give up his daughter without even firing a shot?"

"Ah, nah, nah!" soothed Arapahoe. "That's his danged French way of trying to get 'im in the door. You wait, and you'll shore hear that gun."

They waited, and Boone, leaning against their own cannon, watched the gateway for he knew not what. At any moment Pete Warlemount and his Canadians might rush out and fall upon the foe. At any moment a girl dressed as a bride might step forth to face a living death. The perspiration broke from his brow and ran into his eyes like the blinding, salty tears that must be hers; but as he lay there, trembling with weakness, a sudden *boom!* rent the air, and he leaped to his feet and was gone. Hautcœur had fired again, and the battle was on—and Luz had not passed out the gate.

They rode up the canyon in a long, racing line, the Americans in the lead, the Utes galloping behind, Boone Helms far out in the lead. Then they dashed through The Gateway, and on the valley floor before them they saw a huddle of dead horses and men. Others, wounded, struggled away from the confusing heap; and from the walls of Haut Cœur the brass cannon boomed again, and long-barreled buffalo guns roared. The Comanches were in flight, whipping

their way up the canyon; and, with a yell, the Americans charged.

Through the cottonwoods and up the stream the running fight led on, the Comanches battling viciously to save their wounded and dead, their enemies riding as furiously to strike them down. But as the valley widened out into another broad park, Espejo's voice could be heard as he rallied his men. The pursuers came to a halt. For the Comanches were the equal of any warriors in the country, once they got where they could maneuver their horses.

Now, while the Americans and Utes lay awaiting an attack, a messenger came flying from Haut Cœur. Other Indians had been seen on the plains outside The Gateway, and Don Carlos implored them to return.

He was standing on the wall when the Americans rode back, leaving the Utes still harrying the foe; and, as Boone and Arapahoe hurried in through the gate, he ran to meet them, wringing his hands.

"When he had him before his cannon, that pig, Pete Warlemount, allowed Espejo to escape!" he wailed.

"But the balls struck all around him!" cried Warlemount, almost weeping. "Look at the horses, look at the men, that I killed with one shot——"

"Away with you!" screamed Hautcœur, striking out with the flat of his sword. "What good are they to me, when I begged you to kill one man? And he, Espejo, escaped!"

"What's all this?" demanded Boone, as he drew Warlemount aside. "Where are the other Indians?"

"They are fleeing across the plains!" exclaimed Warlemount indignantly. "It is a victory, but my master is displeased. Can I control the bullets after they leave the mouth of my cannon? Then how could I kill Espejo? We had brought him up at last within range of the big gun; he sat waiting for his wife to come out; and then, *poom!* I discharged my cannon, exactly in the midst of them, and they went down in a row, like that!

"We laughed then, and with our rifles began to shoot at the rest, when out from the mass of dead this Espejo went run-

ning and jumped on the back of a horse. Not a bullet of all those slugs had entered his body, so now it is sure he is a devil."

"Then why did you call us back," broke in Boone, "if the Indians were all running away?"

"It was the master," defended Pete, with a shrug of the shoulders. "One moment he is afraid, the next moment he has forgotten. He runs about and wrings his hands and calls me a pig. *Sacre!* Could a man do more?"

"You made a great mistake," began Boone, "when you shot into the Indians treacherously."

"Meestake!" screeched Warlemount. "*Nom du nom!* Could a man do more? But the bullets went around him; they did not hit him at all! And now this Espejo will come back!"

"*Non! Non!*" protested Hautcœur. "He will never return. And you, my brave friend, have proved that the Americans are ever on the qui vive to defend. Yet you remembered my orders—not until the second gun—and so I brought him up, up close. All was fixed, all was prepared, and we fired the great gun! But this pig of a half-breed, this empty-pocket pig——"

He wrung his hands again and turned away in despair; and Pete Warlemount threw up his palms. So at last the Americans left them and hurried back to Boone's fort, lest Espejo, circling back through the hills, should attempt to surprise it from behind. But the Comanches, after caring for their wounded and tying fast their dead, retreated slowly up the canyon to the wide valley, beyond where they would be safe from a Ute attack. Then, riding day and night, they made their way back to the prairie, leaving the Utes to celebrate their victory.

For the second time in his wooing, the cunning Espejo had been tricked, and his warriors, the scourge of the plains, turned back by a handful of men. The Comanche had met his match in Hautcœur, the Frenchman with the guile of a serpent. But, though he was defeated, his life had been spared, and Espejo might come back for revenge.

A messenger went flying down the long road to Fort Hancock, eighty miles to the south; and soon two troops of cavalry came riding to Haut Cœur to give them the protection they craved. But the plains once more were empty, except for the thieving Kiowas or some wandering war party of Cheyennes; and, after a short interval of peace, one troop was withdrawn, leaving Gildersleeve to guard—and to court Luz.

NEVER before had a lover more favors bestowed on him by all save the fair charmer herself, for Hautcœur had instructed the watchful señora not to extend her wardenship too far. And now Luz once more could step outside the walls and ride forth at the captain's side, but she was forbidden to visit the fort. Yet Boone, seeing her pass, dared to hope she loved him still, for had she not sent him a rose?

The gray-horse troop stayed on, comfortably quartered in the buildings that surrounded the low-walled plaza. The captain and his lieutenants were given the freedom of the Casa Grande, where few not of the elect ever set foot. But it was always Captain Gildersleeve who sat at night in the stiff chairs and conversed with the dreamy-eyed Luz; and, if all her thoughts were not of him, she concealed them behind a languorous smile. Yet when he spoke of love she flushed and looked away, and he saw she was only a child. But she knew more of sorrow than he guessed.

As fall came on, the cottonwoods turned pure gold and committed their leaves to the wind. There was flame on the mountainsides where the maples and ash glowed red, and the prairie, where the buffalo were beginning to roam, turned from green to a yellow brown. All nature took on the colors of a glorious decay, for the winter was close at hand. But, though the buffalo came, no Indians came with them to make war on the overweening Utes; and, after killing their winter's meat, the Utes drifted back into the mountains to get deer-skins for their women to tan.

At Boone's fort the trappers who had garrisoned it for the summer began to

talk of beaver and prime furs; and one by one, like the Indians, they packed their ponies and rode away, until the defenders were reduced to ten. The time had passed for Indian raids and attacks, for the wagon trains had ceased to come through, and, with no fighting to hold them, they sought the fastnesses of the mountains to hunt. And Boone, also, gazed long at the high line of the blue peaks, but he stayed, to be nearer to Luz.

Not since that day when, coming to see his *correcuervo*, she had dared to pour out her heart, not even when he had ridden to defend her from Espejo, had Boone seen his sweetheart again. Perhaps her watchful mother, reading the love in his eyes and remembering their grand match in France, had seen to it that their meetings ceased; but Honey Brown, still playing the matchmaker, had gladdened his heart with a red rose, and he knew that Luz remembered him still. But the rose was withered now; and Luz rode out with Gildersleeve, while Boone looked on from afar.

But while, from his lookout, he watched the white walls of distant Haut Cœur, hoping to see her mount up into the tower, a frightened Mexican came riding with the news of a fresh disaster, and suddenly the cavalry bugles blew. A belated train of freighters had been attacked at Wagon Mounds, even then they were fighting for their lives; and, with a great sounding of trumpets, Captain Gildersleeve and his troopers rode away. The Comanches had crossed the plains to try the mettle of the white men—even in winter their hate could not rest. But Haut Cœur, lulled to apathy by the long presence of the soldiers, did not wake until Espejo had come. For his was a hatred that even winter could not cool, and, while they slept, he crept upon them and struck.

CHAPTER XIV.

ESPEJO RETURNS.

THE night before the raid was full of vague alarms. Owls hooted among the cottonwoods to the yapping wolves out on the plains, and old Rock snuffed

the wind and growled. Three times the uneasy Arapahoe mounted the roof to watch and listen, and, at last, in the grove below he made out the white tops of wagons and heard men throwing down their beds. A belated train of freighters had pulled in and made camp; but old Rock still ruffled and whined.

"What's the matter with you, you old scoundrel?" demanded Arapahoe roughly, as the hound followed him back to his room. "That's jest a bunch of freighters or some no-account buffalo hunters!" But Rock went back and lay down by the gate. Then, as the sky began to pale, he sprang up, barking clamorously. Boone Helms slipped on his moccasins. There was a noise outside the gate, a knocking at the doorway, and he mounted to the roof and looked down.

"Who's there?" he demanded; and from below a man's voice answered.

"We're buffalo hunters," he said, "from across the Canadian. One of our men got gored by a bull, and we're plumb out of medicine. Haven't you got some arniky or something?"

"Wait a minute," responded Boone, "until I open the gate. I reckon we can fix you up."

He heaved up the heavy log that barred the door for the night. As they were bringing in the sick man, Honey Brown came hurrying out with her medicine. When he had been doctored and put to bed, the false dawn was glowing in the east, and a band of coyotes that had been yapping on the plains set up a yell like a thousand devils. Rock rushed out, barking furiously, his hackles erect as he hurled back a challenge to the wolves; and then from the mountainside an owl hooted sepulchrally, and Boone cocked his head to listen. For this owl in his call had hooted four times, while the horned owl hoots only three.

"Hoo-hoo! Hoo-hoo!" sounded the call from the hillside, and Rock rushed out, baying with rage.

"Must be Injuns around," observed the boss hunter uneasily. "Believe I'll go out and he'll bring in the horses."

He started off across the flats to where their hobbled stock was feeding; and, as

Boone gazed after him, he saw, out on the prairie, a dark mass moving slowly. Dawn was breaking behind it, and he could see that it approached; then a bugle, loud and clear, sounded the notes of the charge, and the mass broke up into galloping men. But, though they responded to the bugle call, they did not ride like soldiers, and a hundred lances pricked against the sky.

"Injuns!" shouted Boone, emptying his six-shooter into the air to rouse the sleepy hunters in their wagons; and suddenly from the distance there came a terrific yell, the war whoop of a thousand Comanches!

"Injuns!" cried Boone, rushing back into the fort, with Rock slinking close at his heels; and, without waiting for the hunters, he slammed to the gate and dropped the heavy bar in its slot.

"Injuns!" he yelled again, as Arapahoe came running out and the trappers stumbled forth with their guns; and, leaping up the stairway, he looked off to the east, where the plain suddenly swarmed with horsemen. They had spread out like a fan, hundreds of warriors, stripped for fighting, their guns and lances held up exultantly; and, above the growing thunder of their horses' hoofs, there rose the hideous chorus of their war cry.

Frantic hunters were hammering at the gate for admittance; and then from the Ute camp there came shots and the turmoil of fighting as mounted Comanches swooped down on the tepees. Men ran to and fro, some struggling to open the gate, others holding it against friend and foe; until, at last, the giant Arapahoe heaved the log from its bars, and the buffalo hunters poured in. But, up on the roof, Boone was wrestling with all his might with the coverings of their old, smooth-bore cannon.

The gate slammed and was barred fast against the oncoming wave that moved toward them as resistlessly as the sea; and now every horseman stood out clear in the morning light—they were Comanches, stripped and painted for war. The gleam of naked lance blades and of polished-brass armlets flashed out in a tangle of fluttering war bonnets and bar-

barously decorated shields. Eagle feathers and braided calico dangled from flowing manes and tails, and men and horses alike were smeared with red paint until they seemed to glow in a bath of blood.

THEN the great wave broke against the front of the fort, and the bullets struck the battlements like hail. Two men went down in the first exchange of shots, and for the space of a minute every defender hugged the wall, for the arrows and bullets smashed everywhere. But a thundering blow at the gate brought Arapahoe to his feet, and, leaning over the wall, he emptied his six-shooter at the battering Indians. Pistols and rifles began to spit from the row of loopholes as the trappers recovered from their fright; and the bodies of horses and men, struck down in full flight, held back the racing tide like a dam. Then, as the first rush went by, a second mass of horsemen swept in and took up the fight.

They were Kiowas and Apaches, the allies of the Comanches, and they surged in resistlessly, their long hair flying wild, their arrows coming like a flight of birds. Behind their battered wall the scant twenty white men cowered back to let the storm of death pass. They were beaten down, reduced to nothing, by the fury of the assault, smothered and choked by the smoke and dust. Every gun was empty; and, as they stopped to reload, the Indians whooped out taunts as they passed. Already the corral gate resounded to a succession of heavy blows, as they attempted to breach the wall. After that would come an assault from behind, a savage rush—and death for them all. But as the dust and smoke enveloped them, Boone rose beside the cannon and touched a match to the vent.

There was a deafening roar, an explosion that cracked the cannon and hurled it over backward against the wall; but the fistfuls of slugs which they had rammed down its mouth swept a pathway through the ranks of the foe. Men and horses went down in a long windrow of death, hundreds of ponies stampeded wildly across the flats, and, as the sav-

ages at the gates fell back in a panic, the Americans let out a yell. Arapahoe dashed down with four men to help him fetch rifle cartridges and pistol cartridges by the case; others were posted in the rear to protect the gate of the corral. The first fear of death suddenly passed. They had weathered the first attack with but two men killed, and the night herder cut off outside the fort. The stout gates had held, and the old, condemned cannon had broken the fury of the charge.

Where before, in swirling circles, the Indians had loped ten deep, shooting and yelling and laughing at their plight, now there lay a struggling mass of the wounded and dead, and the Comanches had retreated out of range. But the sight of their wounded, lying at the mercy of the white men, soon aroused them to a desperate valor, and, in a succession of rapid charges, they swept back over the battlefield, snatching them expertly up as they passed. Then, to save their valiant dead from the ignominy of being scalped, they whipped in and dragged them away. But the Americans did not fire, for they were manning the walls. Even Honey and the sick man came to help.

Every trapper was posted now with cartridges at his hand, and cases of rifles were broken open for spare guns; and when the bugler of the Indians sounded the charge, the white men were ready and waiting. Then, with a thunder of rushing feet, the Comanches bore down on them; and every white man shot to kill. First the loud-mouthed buffalo guns, with their fifty-caliber bullets, began sniping at the leaders of the charge; but the fury of the attackers was resistless, and, in a cloud of smoke and dust, they rode up once more to the gates.

Over the parapet the arrows came winging in great flights, the bullets smashed wickedly against the wall; but the trappers had regained their nerve, and, aiming carefully through the loopholes, they emptied twenty saddles in the first rush. In reckless, dizzying flight, the Indians rode in a swift circle, discharging their guns at the fort. Only their feet showed as they passed, and their painted, grinning faces, looking out

from beneath their horses' necks. Under cover of the charge, men dropped down from their horses and ran to hack once more at the gates, but the death toll was too great, and they whipped off over the hill while the buffalo guns flailed them with slugs.

IT was the buffalo hunters, so providentially taken in, who had turned the tide of battle against the Comanches; for their huge guns, almost like cannons, knocked horse and rider flat, and broke the solid front of the charge. Behind each heavy bullet there were three inches of black powder, and from the store-rooms below Arapahoe had brought up fresh cartridges which he had bought for the hide-hunter trade. And now, as they waited for the inevitable charge, the defenders, still half dressed, reloaded their rifles and pistols, gazing down grimly on the wounded and dead.

Not while they lay there beneath the white men's guns would the Comanches give up the fight; while the Americans, knowing that death and torture awaited them, were equally determined to resist. There was no quarter given or asked; and, now that the first shock had passed, the trappers were clear headed and cool. In the previous fighting, though many horses had been killed, the riders had leaped up instantly behind the next warrior that passed; but now Boone rearranged his men. Working together in pairs, hunters and trappers were posted together, the first to shoot down the horse with his buffalo gun, the second to kill the rider as he ran.

Every man was working madly when, from behind the first long hill, the Indian bugle sounded the charge; then, from both sides at once, the Comanches swept in upon them, and in the lead, on the right, rode Espejo. In the fury of the fighting the Americans, looking from the loopholes, had seen nothing but feathered warriors rushing past; but now, on his fine white horse, they recognized the war chief; and the buffalo guns all spoke at once. The horse stumbled and swerved aside; Espejo waved his lance defiantly, and the next moment he leaped up behind another galloping

horseman and was lost in the turmoil of the charge. Then the fort was swallowed up in a tossing sea of shields and heads, and the defenders fired blindly into the mass.

Riding about in a devilish whirligig, the rancorous Comanches brushed the walls, shooting boldly with bows and arrows through the openings of the loopholes, hurtling furiously against the trembling oak gate. Against such a storm of men it seemed useless to contend; the Americans were reduced to nothingness; and, while the defenders crouched behind their ramparts, the wounded Indians were snatched away, and the rest rushed with logs against the gate.

From the horse corral behind there came a loud, triumphant whoop, and Boone, running back, beheld Indian after Indian leaping over the wall behind. Under cover of the frontal attack they had set tree trunks against the parapet, and now they were rushing the gate. But four men had been posted at the rear corners of the fort to protect the corral from attack, and, as Boone ran to help them, the bold Comanche leaders suddenly found themselves caught in a trap. There was a rattle of quick shots, a futile scramble to escape; and while the horse herd, galloping furiously, trampled the dead into the dust, the living were killed, to a man. Every head that appeared over the wall behind was greeted with a shower of bullets.

The first danger passed, and Boone ran back to the front, where the Americans were up and fighting. Honey Brown and three wounded men were crouched beside the hunters, loading their rifles as they dropped them and snatched up full ones, to discharge into the thick of the rout. On the ground before the fort, horses and men lay everywhere; as the leaders went down, the great circle of galloping warriors caught them up, and closed the ranks. It seemed as if some mania possessed these wild barbarians, making them glory in death and invite it.

Then, as the attack in the rear was beaten off with great losses, the bugle sounded the retreat. No brain but Es-

pejo's could have trained this lawless horde to maneuver to the hated army calls; but his cunning assault had failed, and he drew off his men, who bore away their dead as they fled. The Americans lined the wall, too weary to load and shoot, beaten and spent by the desperate assault; and, as they stood there in silence, the sullen boom of a cannon gave notice that Haut Cœur was besieged. Espejo had returned once more to its gates; and who now would deny him his bride?

CHAPTER XV.

A PILLAR OF FIRE.

WHEN the battle was over, the Americans looked about, to find the sun high up in the sky. They were grimed with powder and dust, every muscle was lame and aching, and many had been wounded by arrows. In Arapahoe's long back, four stuck out like spines, and they lay along the roof in windrows; but only three men, besides the night herder of the hunters, had been killed in the prolonged attack. Yet the rest were so weary that not even Hautcœur's cannon could arouse them from their apathy.

They had encountered a force almost as resistless as a hurricane, a force which still surrounded them like the moving circle of a typhoon, through whose wall they must pass again. They had weathered by a miracle the first fury of its onslaught, and now lay at rest in its heart; but, after Haut Cœur had been destroyed, the storm would move down on them and engulf them in a whirlwind of death. Espejo had sworn to drive them out of the Indians' country, and he had three thousand warriors at his back.

Like men prematurely old, the trappers crept about their tasks, clearing away the steel-tipped arrows, cleaning their guns and pistols, and caring for the wounded and dead. But at every boom of the big cannon Boone looked up from his work and turned his eyes toward the tower of Haut Cœur. Through his glasses he could see the heads of men above the parapet, the puffs of white smoke from the gun; but the Indians were not riding in dense masses around the walls—they were circling far out on

the flat. The cannon was a signal, an appeal to them for help, a warning to the Indians to keep away.

But from the long, low hill, behind which the Indians had taken shelter, a steady line of horsemen was circling around and riding through The Gateway of the Sun. They had failed to capture the outpost and wreak revenge on the crow chasers who had harried them away in the past, but the eagles of the plains could now descend on Hautcœur without fear of a blow from behind. And nothing could save him now but his own courage and guns, for the time for diplomacy had passed. He stood at bay at last, with all his treacheries upon his head, and it came to Boone that Hautcœur was afraid.

The men whom he had hired to protect him from Espejo had fought well, taking the brunt of the attack. One discharge from their cannon had broken the ranks of the charging Comanches, yet now Hautcœur signaled them for help. But there would be no riding forth to save him from his fate, for hundreds of warriors lay in wait behind the hills to swoop down and cut them off. The only help now lay with the soldiers at Fort Hancock—and when they came it would be too late.

A bugle sounded up the canyon—the rally, the charge—and, undaunted by their defeat, the Indians went whirling in; and Pete Warlemount's cannon roared again. Then the dust and smoke of battle closed in over doomed Haut Cœur. Boone uttered a prayer for Luz. If death did not find her, she would become Espejo's wife, for he had bought her after the custom of his people. And if she died the light of the world would go out for Boone, yet now he could not lift a hand. He was fighting for his life, hemmed in on every side; but in the corral was his racer, Rawhide, and once on his back he could ride to Fort Hancock in a night.

A volley of bullets from the cover of the trees summoned the defenders once more to their posts, and in a dazed desperation Boone found himself fighting on, hardly thinking of the danger of death. The men who assailed them now were

not the fearless warriors who had ridden up laughing to their gates—they had gone with Espejo to batter down Haut Cœur; these kept the trappers inside their fort. They crept up from tree to tree to gain the rear of the horse corral, but they dared not climb over the walls. They were Kiowas, Apaches, the prairie allies of bold Espejo—the Comanches themselves stormed Haut Cœur.

CAME a lull—and from the canyon the sound of a terrible battle made Boone's blood run hot and cold; then, at last, as evening approached, a huge column of fire rose straight as a pillar to the sky. Haut Cœur had been taken, its defenders had been slain—the smoke was their funeral pyre. At sundown the Indians came trooping back through The Gateway, loaded down with plunder and loot; and in the lead rode Espejo, astride Hautcœur's bloodied bay, with two prisoners on led ponies behind. Boone laid a trembling hand on the glasses at his side—the prisoners were Luz and her sister, Alicia.

As the sun touched the mountaintops, Espejo marshaled his victorious warriors on the plains, out of range of the fort; and, until the darkness fell, they rode to and fro, whooping and yelling and brandishing their weapons. Then the fires began to flicker in a line that grew and grew until Boone's fort was encircled and penned in, and all night, to the beat of the war drum, the Indians danced.

Their archenemy was dead, and with him all his fighting men—only his daughters had been saved, to grace the procession when Espejo returned to his people. But Boone and Brown, who had led the Utes against them and chased the proud Comanches across the plains, still watched from the tower of their fort.

In the morning—when those who died could find their way to the happy hunting grounds, instead of wandering eternally in darkness—in the morning they would strike and breach their walls as at Haut Cœur, where the Canadians had gone down fighting. So all night, without cessation, they sang and danced and invoked their war gods, and in the morning at dawn they struck.

The bugle sounded the charge, and the trappers, who had watched all night, stumbled back to the portholes in front; and, as Arapahoe saw the Indians come pouring down upon them, he turned and kissed Honey good-by. The defenders were few now, and the enemy, after taking Haut Cœur, no longer feared the white man's guns. But though Luz and Alicia had submitted to capture, Honey Brown had elected to die. She crouched down beside her husband, ready to fight with the rest; and Arapahoe muttered a curse on Hautcœur.

It was his treachery and deceit which had aroused these savage warriors to such a frenzy of fanatical hate. Even death itself seemed nothing to them now, as they came on to make their vengeance complete. Yet to yield was to die a thousand deaths in one, by slow torture or the miseries of slavery. With Honey to hand him his guns, Arapahoe knelt behind the wall and waited for the last desperate charge.

The Indians came at a gallop that made the earth tremble; but they were scattered far and wide now, hanging down behind their horses to escape the sure aim of the buffalo hunters. As the big guns began to roar, the leaders went down, only to leap up on the next charging steeds; and then, with exultant yells, they swept down on the fort, and once more the battle was on. They rode close against the walls now, looking up at the portholes from whence the trappers shot down; and each warrior as he passed launched his arrows, until the Americans were forced to draw back.

On the roof a stream of arrows shot up through the holes, to face which was to invite certain death; but the high walls in front made that side of the fort impregnable, and the defenders let the first storm pass. For Boone's fort was not Haut Cœur, with its long, low walls and the broad plaza inviting attack from behind; it had been built to stand assault, and while the oak gates held, no Indian could enter the citadel. Yet they had succeeded, for the moment, in silencing the hunters' fire, and, leaping down, they rushed at the gate.

But the jutting bastion on the corner

exposed the Indians to the fire of the men who were posted in front, and suddenly from the portholes which opened on the portal the bullets fell among them like rain. There was no drawing back now from the threat of Indian arrows, and, as their leaders went down and the spiked gate turned their ax blades, the remnant of the stormers fled. The great swirl of mounted warriors suddenly felt the slash of bullets from the Americans who had withheld their fire, and once more horses and men piled up in a struggling heap, which turned the galloping stream away.

IN the dust and smoke, the defenders lost sight of everything but the swarming mass of Indians before their guns. But almost from the first there had been shooting from the rear, and now it grew into a roar. Boone and three or four trappers hurried back to give their aid, but already the corral wall had been surmounted. Over its top a swarm of Comanches had poured at the first assault, and, while the battle raged in front, they had unfastened the heavy gate, though the horse herd still milled about inside. One length of heavy log chain, held together by a padlock, still resisted their frenzied assault, and the men on the walls shot them down.

But a score of notched trees had been dragged during the night and set against the wall of the corral, and over them the Indians were swarming like ants to attack the fort from behind. With gun barrels and long poles they wrenched and pried at the stubborn log chain which kept the broken gate from falling flat, and, while the stampeded horses dashed madly to and fro, the fight for their possession waged furiously. Indians knelt along the walls, firing up at the defenders who were shooting at the men by the gate; but, as Boone and his trappers ran up and joined the fight, they took shelter in the midst of the herd.

Twice the horses, driven to madness by the presence of the Indians, circled and charged against the half-open gate; but the log chain held, and as the dust cloud cleared, the white men began to levy their toll. They were eight in all,

now, and others from the front were rushing up cartridges and more guns; and, shooting from behind their ramparts, they emptied rifles and six-shooters, until the crowd at the gate broke and fled. Dead Indians lay everywhere, and those who remained alive were being trampled by the milling herd. Some had sprung in desperation to the back of passing horses, hanging on and swinging under their necks; but, as the buffalo guns came up, horses and men were shot down until the remnant bolted for the gate.

But now the smell of smoke and burning pitch revealed the rear end of the patio in flames; and scores of fire-tipped arrows, flying over the west wall, revealed yet another storming party at work. Leaving the fire to rage unhindered, they ran to the bastion behind, and once more, almost hand to hand, they fought off a swarm of savages who were attempting to scale the walls. Every shot from the white men's guns seemed to find its mark now, as the odds against them grew, and suddenly, through the smoke, they saw the enemy in flight—the bugle was blowing the retreat.

Espejo had been beaten, his greatest effort had failed to conquer this band of frontiersmen. But the walls had been too strong, the defenders too desperate; and at last Espejo had lost heart.

The sun was two hours high before the fire had been conquered and the wounded carried below; and then, while the Indians withdrew to hold a council, the Americans mended the breach in their corral. Many horses had been killed and wounded, and the remainder were famished. After leading out the race horses, the rest were shut inside and the gate reinforced with chains.

IN the big room where Honey, as a bride, had sung "Dixie" and "Home, Sweet Home," she now had wounded men laid out on the floor—even old Rock had two arrows in his back. But not a man had been killed, despite the hand-to-hand fighting, and hundreds of Indians had gone down.

"They're through," announced Arapahoe, as he came in, smiling grimly, to

give a drink all around to the men. "We whipped 'em good that time, and they'll never come back—if they do, we'll whip 'em again."

"Oh, lordy!" moaned Honey. "Won't they ever quit coming? I was going to cook some coffee, but I'm plumb give out." And she sank down dejectedly in a chair.

"We got lots of cattridges yet," spoke up Arapahoe confidently. "And after the fogging we give 'em in that corral with our six-shooters they'll think twice before they tackle *this* fort."

"But they took Haut Cœur," faltered Honey, beginning to weep. "And, oh, those poor girls! Can't we do something, Arapahoe, to save them?"

"Not a thing, Honey," soothed Arapahoe; "but don't you take on. The Comanches will never git *you*!"

"Yes, but can't you send out and get the soldiers?" implored Honey. "Oh, I'd almost go myself, only——"

"Never mind," confided Arapahoe. "Boone is going, soon's it's dark. Didn't you see him bring in his horse?"

"Oh, is he?" cried Honey, running joyously out to look; and there in the patio, soberly rubbing down his horse, stood Boone and his racer, Rawhide.

"Yes, I'm going," responded Boone; and, at sight of his drawn face, Honey laid a motherly hand on his cheek.

"You're tired," she said. "Come in and lay down. And I know you'll save them—I do!"

"No, I'll tend to my horse, first," answered Boone despondently; and Honey hurried off to cook some coffee. Then, when all had been fed, she forced him to take some sleep, while the others stood guard in his stead.

But the plain was now empty, not a single shot was fired; and through all the long day, while the Indians sat in council, the white men rested and slept. Guns were cleaned and loaded and laid out in orderly rows, and hay was thrown to the famishing animals in the corral. As evening approached the trappers mounted the wall to look out once more across the battlefield. It was littered with gaudy headdresses, lances, and shields. Now nothing remained but the

bodies of horses, over which the crows and ravens held high carnival.

Last of all upon the roof came the man to whom the night would mean a grim hide and seek with death, but he did not meet their eyes as he passed. He had elected to make the ride to Fort Hancock for help—and yet, he knew soldiers too well. They could fight, but could they follow the long trail Espejo would leave, when he rode back across the Staked Plains? And would they dare, with their limited forces, to fight as frontiersmen fight, regardless of the strength of the foe? If they dared, if they would mount and ride on the spur until they whirled into the Indians' camp, then Luz and her little sister might yet be saved from a terrible fate. There was still a chance.

Boone mounted to the gun tower, where his rifles, cleaned and oiled, were laid out for the next attack; and, while he stood there scanning the plain and mapping out his line of flight, he saw three Indians ride up on a hill. They sat outlined against the sky, gazing down on the white men's fort; and, as they began to point and gesture, Boone picked up his field glasses, for he saw by their rigging that they were chiefs. But when he brought them into focus he put down the glasses, and reached swiftly for his buffalo gun.

From the fort to the long hill on whose crest the Indians stood was twelve hundred yards, perhaps more; but, adjusting his sights and aiming high while he held his breath, Boone stiffened against the kick of his gun and fired.

Boom! thundered the gun. For a second Boone watched the Indians, sitting broadside on their horses in the sun. Then the man in the center fell back and off his horse, and the others split right and left. The middle chief had been hit, and the astounded hunters and trappers jumped and danced and gave cheer after cheer; but, even as they shouted, the chief rose to his feet, and his companions came galloping back. They swung down and picked him up, flinging him roughly behind a saddle, and the next moment they had whipped behind the hill.

"Good shot!" cheered the hunters,

running to slap Boone on the back; and now, for the first time, he smiled.

"That man was Espejo," he said.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE ARMY.

TO an Indian—and to all who live exposed to the winds of chance—every event has a portent beyond itself. Every savage has his medicine, conferred by the gods to whom in secret he prays; and to Boone Helms, though he laughed, there had been given some subtle power which made him both lucky and brave. In years of strife and battle no bullet had pierced his skin; and now, from his buffalo gun a bullet had gone so true that it had knocked Espejo from his horse. From their camp behind the hill there came howling and lamentation as the Indians saw their leader struck down, and the simple-minded hunters nodded wisely to each other as Boone sat cleaning his gun.

His medicine was good, and Espejo, for all his warriors, could not overcome the gift of the *corcuervo*. It was the little fighting bird, now gone to the south, who had conferred this shooting eye on Boone; and, some power beyond itself, whether magic or not, had sped the bullet that had struck Espejo down. It was a sign, and when Boone laughed all the hunters laughed with him, and suddenly their hearts were brave.

That evening, as darkness fell, they opened the gate for him silently, and watched him pass out into the night; and every man knew that, in the pouch against his heart, he bore the feathers of the *corcuervo* and the eagle. But besides these he bore also a withered rose, which had come from the hand of Luz.

The camp fires of the Indians still encircled the fort, but, after two nights of dancing, two days of incessant battle, the watchers had lost their alertness. Boone walked before his horse, leading him down through the blackest shadows; and when Rawhide, drawing back, snorted softly in his ear, Boone turned and slipped off to one side. Other horses were in the bottoms, some wounded in the fight, some hopping about in raw-

hide Indian hobbles; and, as he drifted down among them, Boone pushed a few ahead, to feel out the ground in advance. But the Indian outposts were hidden close, for to them a thousand devils inhabited every shadow of the night. To be killed in the darkness would be to wander forever in the Stygian regions below; but the religion of the white man took no account of darkness or devils, and once more Boone proved his medicine good.

He had headed toward the north, where the line of fires was thinnest, and when he came at last to the circle that hemmed him in, he mounted and hung low, out of sight. A guard leaped up suddenly with a challenge in Comanche, and Boone answered him back with a jest; then, as the Indians by the fire rose up to bar his way, he spurred his horse among them, with a yell. There was a rattle of pistol shots, a scattering right and left, and the swift whisper of arrows as he fled; then he dashed out on the prairie and, shaking off all pursuit, circled back to the east and south.

He was free, and the night, which filled the Indians with fear, to him was like the shadow of God's hand; and now, following the wagon marks of the lower Santa Fe Trail, he rode toward Fort Hancock for help. Along the bank of the Canadian and out across the prairie, now sighting the buttes of Wagon Mound, where the emigrants had been killed, now passing through broad bottom lands and *vegas*, he sped on at a tireless lope until Rawhide began to labor, then pulled him to a trot, to a walk. Poor Rawhide had just begun to stagger when they rode up to the fort and heard the quick challenge of the guard:

"Halt! Who is there?"

"A friend," responded Boone. "I've rode from Boone's fort——"

"Dismount!" ordered the soldier; and, with a heartfelt curse, Boone dropped down wearily from his horse. This was the army, where no man was allowed to think or act, where orders were everything and human needs nothing, where a man could not help if he would.

"Corporal of the guard!" shouted the sentinel, holding Boone at a distance, and

at last the corporal came. But he, in turn, after listening to Boone's story, turned him over to the sergeant of the guard. Then, in the hot, stuffy guard-house, he was brought before an officer, who passed him on to the officer of the day. And there, as with bloodshot eyes he scanned the new face, Boone recognized Captain Gildersleeve.

EVEN at that early hour he was immaculate, his boots polished, his sword scabbard gleaming; and at sight of his high, hooked nose and arrogant eyes, Boone straightened his drooping shoulders and glared.

"Oh, it's you, eh?" he said. "Well, I want to see the colonel. No, I don't give a damn if you're the Emperor of China—I'll tell my story to Colonel Latimer."

"You'll tell it to me, first," answered Gildersleeve coldly. "What is it you wish to report?"

Boone drew a long breath and muttered to himself, but he had encountered this kind of officer before.

"I wish," he said sarcastically, "to report that Haut Cœur is taken and burned. You were detailed to guard it, I believe. And everybody there, except Alicia and Luz Hautcœur, has been killed by Espejo's Comanches. Now maybe you'll take me to the colonel, you swelled-up dude!"

He was out of his head from weariness and rage; but Gildersleeve took no notice of his cursing.

"Killed!" the captain cried, and his pale face turned paler yet. "But—but where is Luz?" he stammered.

"She's taken prisoner—in the camp of Espejo. But if you come right *now*, and forget all this red tape, you can catch him and get her back."

"Come with me!" exclaimed Gildersleeve, throwing down the pen with which he had been writing his report; and, striding past the guards, he led the way to the colonel's quarters, where he battered with lusty blows at the door.

"Wake up, colonel!" he called. "The Comanches have taken Haut Cœur. Here's a messenger from Boone's fort, and——"

"What's that?" demanded the colonel, throwing open the door and staring; and Boone thrust Gildersleeve aside.

"I'm Boone Helms," he announced, "and I've ridden all night to ask for soldiers and help. We've been fighting Espejo for over two days—he's taken Hautcœur's place and burned it. But what we want is some soldiers, to cut him off at the crossing and get back Luz Hartcœur and her sister. He's holding them prisoners in camp."

"Espejo!" echoed the colonel. "How many men has he got? Three *thousand*! You don't mean that? Well, call it two thousand. We're outnumbered ten to one, and those Comanches are terrible fighters. Yes, yes—I understand—but we can't move at once. We must get up our pack animals and equip the supply wagons first; this may keep us in the field for a month. Now you go with my orderly and get something to eat and drink——"

"But, colonel!" reasoned Boone, "you can't run down those Comanches with a lot of wagons along. Call your dragoons and come ahead, and we'll cut them off at the Canadian——"

"Now, now!" broke in the colonel. "We're in the army, young man, and must follow the rules of the service. I'd like to do it—you may be right—but our experience in the past has taught us to be fully prepared. We can't start until noon, if then; so you go and get some sleep. And, by the way, we'll put you down as a government scout—otherwise you can't accompany the troops." And, still protesting, Boone was taken away. That was the regulations again.

He was hungry and tired, but before he would lie down he worked over Rawhide for two hours. Again and again he rubbed his trembling limbs, feeding and watering him a little at a time; until, at last, when all danger of foundering was past, he left him in the care of a sergeant. The fort was all a-bustle, bugles were sounding, men rushing about, and over at the farrier's the anvils were clanging as horses were inspected and shod. But it all took time, and Boone dropped off to sleep—for a long campaign lay ahead.

IT was late when he roused up from the empty stall where he had slept, and his heart sank as he thought of Luz, still looking and praying for aid. Nearly a day had passed since the bullet from Boone's gun had struck Espejo from his horse; and the Indians, if their chief was dead, might have scattered at dawn, overcome by their superstitious dread. But if Espejo still lived, the siege would go on as before. Arapahoe and Honey and the brave trappers and hunters might yet share the fate of Hautcœur. Boone rose up quickly and hurried to the parade ground, where three troops of cavalry were under inspection; but when, at last, he reached the colonel, he was informed that the start had been put off till the next day at dawn.

"To-morrow!" echoed Boone. "But to-morrow will be too late. Can't you send a troop of soldiers to cut them off at the crossing?"

But the colonel shook his head.

"No," he said, "we must march in one command, and the supply train is not fully equipped. We will start to-morrow, at dawn."

"Then you might as well stay here!" flared up Boone. "To-morrow the Indians will be gone."

"I'm sorry," replied the colonel, turning back to his papers; and Boone strode out, cursing his fate.

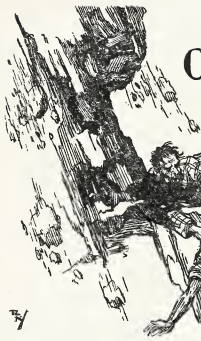
Here were the men, armed and equipped, eager to dash off through the night and save the two captives from Espejo; but the iron rules of the service, which none of them could break, required that they wait until dawn. And dawn would be too late, even if, with their dragging wagons, they could hope to cut Espejo off. Something told him, and told him true, that many months must pass before he would be able to see Luz again.

To be continued in the next issue of THE POPULAR, on the news stands September 7th.



WHAT THE BIRDS SING ABOUT

WHAT person has not listened to chickens, canaries, thrushes or any birds, without wondering if they really were talking to each other in some language quite beyond our understanding? There are certainly reasons accounting for the different pitches and calls. The answer is probably that birds do talk to each other, limitedly, of course, but in a language as adequate for them as ours is for us. Some one advanced the theory that birds imitate what they wish to discuss. A hawk will imitate, perhaps, the agonized cries of his proposed victims, in order to attract his mate to the feast. Mother birds have been heard to emit sounds like the hissing of snakes, which might be interpreted as a warning to the bird children. Just as a canary, in its cage, will sing loud and enthusiastically when music is played in the same room, so may the song of the nightingale be taken as an imitation of the babblings of the stream near which it prefers to build its nest. It is more likely, though, that birds imitate food sounds, as the cracking of seeds or snail shells. One thing is sure: that it takes some time for a bird to learn how to sing properly. Its first sound is nothing more than a weak chirping, and it builds up in volume and variety until, like the canary, it can trill and sustain and vary its notes. The first attempts of a young rooster are ridiculous, but after long experimenting and training, the lordly king of the chicken yard develops a long and melodious crow. If birds and animals, too, can learn to recognize the crude calls we humans summon them by—as with chickens, cows or dogs—then it's pretty sure that they have their own languages.



The Past and Old Dan Pettigrew

By Robert J. Pearsall

Author of "The Esculapian Creed," "Lonesome Stakes a Claim," Etc.

David was a softy, used to a life far different from that his prospector father had led. But that father's old partner, Pettigrew, made a man of David.

Get gold who can, by pick or pan,
And this be the law that binds it:
For the poor man hope, for the thief a rope,
And the gold to him that finds it.
—*Song of Dan Pettigrew.*

OLD Dan Pettigrew was standing in his favorite position and posture in the corner of Linseed's saloon—"Linseed" being short for Lynn C. Duke, the proprietor's name—when, blinking through the tobacco smoke along the bar with his rheumy old eyes, he sighted a fresh, youthful face which looked very familiar to him, but which he'd certainly never seen before. Pondering upon these seemingly contradictory facts, he found something stirring in his memory which caused him almost to forget the drink that the muddled tenderfoot at his side was standing him; and he wasn't more than half surprised when the subject of his thoughts named himself in a rather overloud voice.

"I'm David Arnold. Yes, I'm a sort of a gold hunter," he said, laughing. He'd had several drinks. "I'm looking for an old prospector that's been recommended to me, one Dan Pettigrew. Do you-know him?"

And "Poetical" Pettigrew's hand shook as he replaced his glass upon the bar. Right away, he knew what the young man was after, and what he wanted him, Pettigrew, for. And the worst of it was that, of all the men in the whole gold-rush country, young Arnold had for bar companion the one man he shouldn't have been talking to, and to whom he shouldn't have given his name.

But the mischief was done. Besides, the tenderfoot was buying freely. So Pettigrew fingered his glass tentatively, delivering himself the while of certain aphorisms concerning gold hunting; but all the time his glance was ranging down the bar, studying the other couple. Or

rather, studying David Arnold. The other man was perfectly obvious, and would have been even if Pettigrew hadn't known him off and on for twenty years.

A middle-aged, lean, hard, weather-beaten man, he was, quick and nervous in everything he did or said, and with a sort of chill in his sharp, gray, active eyes that would have warned any mountain-wise stranger. But David Arnold wasn't mountain-wise, or worldly-wise, either. That was why the bartender had winked over David's shoulder at the lean man, and why the lean man was talking to him now. Perhaps the bartender was also inspired by resentment at the fact that David, in his inexperience concerning the barroom code, had filled his whisky glass to the brim.

David's mountain immaturity was further confessed by his bright-yellow boots, new broad-brimmed hat and corduroys, and new revolver in polished black holster—good salesmen they had in Denver. But a deeper immaturity was in his infirm mouth and chin and introspective, brooding eyes, over which rose a broad, imaginative forehead—a weakened, toned-down reproduction, indeed, of that other set of features Pettigrew had known. But Pettigrew, just then, didn't recognize that fact.

DAVID was facing the bar, lifting his glass as he gave his name, so he didn't see the startled glance the lean man gave him, followed by a stare of deadly eagerness, immediately veiled. And the lean man's voice, as he replied, was merely careless.

"Old Dan Pettigrew—Poetical Pettigrew, he is. Everybody knows him. Lives in a cabin up Hardpan Gulch a bit. Not much account. You can find him easy in the mornin'."

The lean man toned his voice so Pettigrew couldn't hear him; but Old Dan wouldn't have resented it if he had heard. He knew he was not much account.

But David, now—David Arnold! The very name flooded the old man's mind with a host of memories, and very nearly flooded his eyes, too. One particularly torturing memory—but never mind! His job now was to amuse and encourage the

tenderfeet—for drinks. He took to singing jovially:

"The miner robs the hills o' gold,
The gambler robs the miner,
Barkeep robs all in this here rush,
The same as the Forty-niner.

"But it's ho! boys, never mind that;
In the hills there is more treasure,
So lift her up an' drink her down—
Drinkin's the miner's pleasure."

There was much more of it, but it came two stanzas to a drink.

The lean man was entertaining David, too, telling him about the gold rush. It was the wildest boom the Powder Ridge country had known in twenty years, he said. Dust that ran four dollars to a pan had been found in Eel River, nuggets of pure gold in Breakneck Gulch, and there were other strikes. Fortune hunters had poured in from Arizona, Utah, Idaho and every corner of Colorado. Hundreds of them camped on Eel and Virgin Rivers; and Hardpan, Gold Ridge, Sepulveda, and the other towns in the district were crowded by just such a mixture as jammed this saloon.

There were three or four quiet, scientific chaps from the colleges whom the lean man pointed out, and about as many gummed-up and broken-down old loafers, a dozen burly, capable-looking miners, more than that number of excited, noisy tenderfeet, and considerably more than there should have been of sinister, dangerous-looking roughs, upon whose probable methods of acquiring gold the lean man didn't dwell.

"They're mostly going it blind, but you, now—you must have a good tip. You wouldn't be here if you hadn't."

"Maybe I have," said David, flattered and boastful, "but I'm not telling anybody. Not me."

"That's right. You gotta be careful who you talk to. Have another," said the lean man, and himself filled David's glass. His hands moved swiftly, surely; every movement he made was swift and sure and purposeful.

Though he caught but little of their talk, the situation was plain enough to Pettigrew, and he found his own pursuit

lose interest. He edged uncertainly along the bar toward the pair; but bedlam intervened before he reached them.

A moment before, a tall, big man had entered the saloon from the street. He wore no coat; on his flannel shirt was a sheriff's badge. His glance ranged the room, and came to rest on David's companion. He moved in that direction, and a sudden stillness advanced like a wave ahead of him. Men between the two moved, as though carelessly, aside; men at the bar fingered their glasses, put them down, and postured themselves for a leap in any direction.

Warned by the stillness, the lean man turned. His nervous body was suddenly still as an image. The sheriff's hand was near his holster. The eyes of the two men met.

But the sheriff spoke in a friendly manner.

"Lo, Jake. I gotta have a little talk with——"

Crash! The youth called David Arnold was seized in a viselike grip, and flung around from the bar. The lean man was sheltering himself behind David's pinioned body, and firing under David's left arm with his free hand. The reports were deafening, rapid as Gatling fire; six spurts of flame and smashing crashes, and then darkness and smoke hung everywhere.

An inarticulate, hysterical babbling broke loudly into the sudden, breathless silence that followed the shots. It came from a spot on the floor near where the lean man and David had stood.

"Easy, boys, easy!" came the sheriff's voice. "Ain't you got another lamp?"

A LAMP was procured. The sheriff was quite unhurt. The small man, protected by David's body, had aimed only at the lamps; he had got clean away. The sheriff remarked mildly:

"Well, I kind of wanted him to declare himself."

As he went through the door, a queer thing happened. Jeering, laughing, or with mock solicitude, men had turned to the frightened youth on the floor, and had started to help him to his feet. His hysterical babbling had stopped, but his

face was as white and quivering as paper blown by a wind. The roughest of the crowd moved in his direction. It was plain that they hoped to find in him and his fears a continuance of the entertainment started by the man called Jake.

The bartender grinned over at the crowd, a brimful glass in his hand.

"'Ere's the way 'e takes 'em, boys—a man-size drink. Pass it over. It's what 'e needs."

Some one took the glass and started to pass it to David. Then he stopped, confronted by a pair of angry old eyes and an upflung, meager hand. With his quickest and most energetic movement in many years, Old Dan Pettigrew had broken through the circle surrounding David Arnold.

"You bunch of fools!" he rasped. "An' you!" He glared at the bartender. "That's what ails him—your whisky's made him sick an' crazy. He ain't used to it. You think he's scared. Hell! he don't come of that kind of stock. Let him go, now. I'm takin' care of him, I am. Scared—why, you durn fools!"

And, looking scornfully around, the old man gripped David's elbow with a still powerful hand, and propelled him across the room and through the door, into the starlight of Hardpan's one dusty, crooked, wind-swept street, just now crowded with men listening to the pounding hoofs of the horse that was carrying the man called Jake away into the mountains.

"There'll be hell poppin', now that he's off the fence," said some one. "He'll be after a big haul for a get-away."

As soon as they were out of hearing of the crowd, Pettigrew began explaining himself.

"Heard you askin' for me. I'm Dan Pettigrew, your father's old partner. Like father 'n' son, we were. An' I'll bet I know what you're after. It's about this, ain't it?" Lurching a little, but in a low voice charged with very real emotion, Po. etical Pettigrew recited:

"'Twas a long ago an' a long ago,

That my partner died with dancin' feet,
Dancin' an' dancin' to an' fro,

Yanked from a Scanlan saddle seat.
'Thief an' murderer!' If such was he,
May I swing from that same tree!

"It's that, ain't it? It's about your father's killin' that you've come?" Pettigrew caught the nod of the youth. "You come along with me for the night, then, an' in the mornin' we'll talk things over proper."

Poetical Pettigrew had lived alone in his cabin up Hardpan Gulch for five years, going placidly and steadily downhill all the time. This descent dated from the night he had been compelled to kill a man who had attempted a double sleeve draw on him in a poker game, first of a needed ace, then of a derringer pistol. Pettigrew had drawn in orthodox fashion, but much more swiftly. For some reason or other, this commonplace incident had caused Pettigrew, then fifty years old, to quit poker, which had been for a long time his principal occupation and interest. He had abandoned prospecting some years before, ostensibly because of certain growing convictions concerning the evils of "easy gold," or rather the pursuit of it, upon which subject it was commonly said in Hardpan that he was "nuts."

So, because nature abhors and the devil loves a mental vacuum, he took to drink—and poetry. He rhymed as he drank, and finally took to rhyming that he might continue to drink. Drinks were certainly more valued in Hardpan than rhymes, but they were also vastly more plentiful, so he found the traffic possible. He was a cheerful and entertaining troubadour at first, but lately, to be frank about it, had actually become something of a bum.

BUT on the day following David Arnold's arrival in town, Pettigrew appeared more animated than he had been before for years. David's appearance, and a certain thing David had told him last night, had reawakened in the old man the strongest desire of his life. He bustled about, getting breakfast; and when at last the two had eaten, he settled down opposite David, and regarded him with admiring, attentive eyes.

"My, what a picture of your father you are. I'd swear 'twas him a-settin' there. An' you're as good a man, I bet. You couldn't be a better. To think them

fools thought you was afraid last night. Well, they'll find out different."

David stirred uneasily in his chair, but said nothing.

"An' they'll find out different about your father, too. That's what we've got to do, to show 'em——"

"And find the gold, of course," put in David.

"Well, of course, we got to find the gold to show 'em, I know that. Findin' the gold an' the mine he got it from will prove that your father was innocent. If it doesn't—if we find the gold an' no mine to explain it—well, tee hee!"—the old man laughed—"I don't have to ask you what you want to do. We'll just fix it so the gold'll be forever lost. An' I know how."

David glanced at Pettigrew, with a shade of anxiety.

"Of course," he said mechanically, "the main thing is to clear my father's name."

"As your mother said. She had the right idee, too. I'm glad of that. You can't always tell about wimmen."

David flushed.

"My mother is——" Then he checked himself. "She thought, as you do, that if we couldn't find the mine from which the gold had come, we'd better leave the gold where it is. But outside of that, she didn't tell me much. She's kept it secret all these years, and even now, she don't like to talk about it. She probably thought you'd tell me all the circumstances; and I wish you would."

"Natural enough," said Pettigrew. "Well, I'll tell you the whole thing. You just set an' listen."

"It all come from it gettin' advertised around that your father had bought an option on a block of Denver real estate—it's worth about a million to-day—an' had agreed to pay for it with a hundred thousand in gold. Everybody was wonderin' where he'd mined the gold, an' where he had it hid. But he hadn't any partner—I was in 'Nevady then—so it wasn't strange that nobody knew at all."

"Then the Scanlan bunch caught your father in a hold-up, or so they said. They was actin' as self-constituted vigilantes at the time, an' so they hung him in a sort of legal fashion. But what I an'

some others have always thought is that they were the road agents themselves, an' they hung your father tryin' to make him tell where the hundred thousand was, an' where he'd mined it. Course, if he had such a mine, he wouldn't be holdin' people up. Contrariwise, if he was the hold-up, it'd prove pretty clear that he got the whole hundred thousand that way.

"There was lots of robberies that year, an' it might easy have been true. People have said, too, that if he'd had a mine, it'd have been found. It's easy to hide gold, but not a mine. An' now, you come with a letter which he wrote to your mother, tellin' about the gold, but not a word about how he got it. Plumb unnatural, that was—but I'm still bettin' on your father."

"I am, too," said David weakly.

"Course you would—you're your father's son," said Pettigrew, without seeming to notice David's tone. "But your mother, come to think of it, she couldn't have been right sure that everything was all right, or she wouldn't have kept the letter secret all these years. But then, she mightn't have wanted to have anything to do with the stuff that caused her husband to be hung—wimmen are like that, I've read. I dunno. But whatever she thought, she's had no reason to change, has she? Why's she openin' the matter up now?"

David flushed a little.

"It's for me."

The old man leaned forward, with a startled look at David.

"For you! I'd think——" Then he subsided. "Well, I suppose that's natural, too. You're young an' you need a start; 'tis the woman's idee of it. A hundred thousand o' easy gold! Easy gold! You know, I've made up a little rhyme 'bout that:

"Bones on the desert, swamp an' hill,

By all these, the same story's told:

Are men murdered, or do they kill,

It's all for the sake o' easy gold.

"There's more to it, but now—— You ain't showed me that letter yet."

David, who had shuddered slightly at the lines, looked very glad to produce the letter.

"There's only one part that matters," he said, turning over the faded, yellow sheets. "I'll read it to you."

"Wait a minute," said Pettigrew.

He went to the door, jerked it suddenly open, and then walked completely around the little cabin.

"Just to make sure—but it's all right," he said, returning.

The worry on David's face increased at Pettigrew's display of caution. He hesitated a moment and then read:

"You remember when Dan Pettigrew and I were prospecting up from Hardpan last summer. Well, the place where our fortune is hidden, yours and mine, is about ten miles due west from our furthest point up, at the top of a precipice about a hundred feet high. Back of the precipice is a V-shaped mountain notch, with the steepest sides you ever saw, covered with underbrush, which is just now as dry as tinder. Well, our fortune is hidden just at the middle of the top of this V. I'm telling you this so you can picture me just jaying over it there, so glad for your sake and little David's sake, and dreaming, too——"

David broke off and looked up anxiously.

"The rest don't matter. Can you tell from that——"

THE question was checked by a very queer look he had caught on Pettigrew's face—a look, it seemed, of sudden radiant joy. Coupled with that was another change, as though the fog which always seemed to hover around the old man's mind had been dispelled for a moment. It was with a searching, questioning gaze that he was regarding David. Then the fog settled down again, and he replied slowly:

"Yes, I guess so. Yes, I can tell the place."

"And you can take me there?" David's voice was avid.

"Massacre Mountain, it's called hereabouts," went on Pettigrew. "Because—but that don't matter. Yes, I can take you there."

"And when'll we start?"

"Right away. The sooner the better. I gotta go into Hardpan first an' get some provisions an'—something else. It'll

cost about ten dollars. I ain't had much luck lately— Thanky! Soon as I get back, we'll start. It'll be a hard hike; take about four days to get there."

"A hike! Can't we ride? I'll pay."

"Not over the trail we gotta take. Nothin' but our own shanks'll get us there. An' we'll have to carry provisions an' a blanket apiece, 'cause the nights are cool up here, though the days are blisterin'. You ain't got a knapsack, have you? Well, I got a spare one. I'll get you a canteen in town. You just wait here till I get back. No use tirin' yourself beforehand."

Left alone, David alternately exulted over his good fortune, and shrank from the prospect before him. Hiking didn't appeal to him, and there might be actual danger. He hadn't forgotten what he had observed of the disturbed condition of the gold-rush country, during his stage trip to Hardpan, and in Hardpan itself, one hour's endurance of which had forced him into a saloon to seek liquid courage. Then had come that shooting. He shuddered. Why, if the sheriff had tried to take the man called Jake, he might have been killed!

And he could have wished some other companion than this freakish, rhyming old Pettigrew, in whose attitude toward both David and the treasure, David sensed something enigmatic. Why the old man's suddenly veiled look of joy when David had finished reading the letter, and what was the mysterious "something else" which Pettigrew was going to get in Hardpan? Since David was paying for it, he certainly should be told.

When Pettigrew came back, he brought with him, among other things, a small, cylindrical package, which he wrapped carefully in some old cloths, and placed in the outer pocket of his knapsack, humming cheerfully as he did so:

"Do we thirst or starve or die,
By knife an' bullet, you an' I—
Coyote-interred or 'neath the mold—
'Twill be for the sake of easy gold."

David flinched a little at this; then his face hardened. Easy gold, again! There was no use arguing with the old man's eccentricities, but—gold was gold. And

it was to get the gold that he had come here, not at all on the quixotic errand Pettigrew imagined. If the old man got in the way—well, what usually happened in such cases might happen again. They would be alone. Coward though he knew himself, a safe enough way should be found to handle old man Pettigrew.

But he wished he knew what was in that knapsack pocket. Later on, he wished it more and more. Odd indeed, it was, the scrupulous care with which Pettigrew, on the trail, protected that portion of the knapsack from every shock and collision, as though death itself slept there and he was afraid of waking it.

FROM the beginning, it was a hard trail over which Pettigrew led on, and in places hardly a trail. It was a break-neck, muscle-testing, breath-taking scramble, through mountain gorges, up cliffs and precipices, across shelving landslides, where it sometimes seemed that men had never traveled before.

It was a season of drought. The canyons were windless, the air was dead and sultry, and in places a thick, gray dust arose from the decayed debris of ages, lying like powder on their faces and filling their nostrils. As they advanced, that first midsummer morning, the heat of the sun on their faces became like that of an actual flame.

A terrific experience for David, who had never known actual physical hardship before. Thorns tore his clothing and thrust stinging points into his flesh; brambles whipped and bloodied his face. A childish desire came to him to quit and lie down and sob, and he would probably have done it had he not realized that Pettigrew, with the weight of his years and of drink upon him, was in worse shape than himself. Then it was an unreasoning hatred that stimulated David; he'd hike this old fellow down, who was leading him into such unendurable hardships.

By midmorning, David's unaccustomed feet were blistered, and by noon they were bleeding; but fatigue had numbed him somewhat, and he kept on, while there stirred within him a wholly unique feeling—pride in his physical endurance.

But then occurred something that shocked back that pride remorselessly, and changed his feelings toward Pettigrew a little.

They had come out of the underbrush to a pathless avenue of rocks, upon which the myriad burning darts of sunlight splintered dazzlingly. A moment later, David's ears caught a paralyzing sound. He'd never heard that sound before, but it rooted him in his tracks.

He could not move, though it seemed his life depended upon movement, for not three feet before him was the mottled head of a coiled rattler, swaying evilly. The snake struck, the next instant. As it struck, David felt himself violently jerked from behind; he went backward and was saved. Before the snake could coil again, Pettigrew crushed its head with a rock.

"I—I—I——" stammered David, shaking as with ague.

But Pettigrew didn't seem to notice. He stalked on ahead of David, remarking over his shoulder:

"You're your father's son, all right. That was nery work, standin' still like that. I know you meant to catch him like I did, after he struck. But you gotta learn to judge the distance. Them di'mond-backs sure can extend themselves."

"Old fool!" thought David; but a surge of gratitude thrilled him as it had last night. No one else in all his cottoned life had ever commended him for courage.

Presently, they came to underbrush again; and now David, leading, almost stumbled into a wide crevasse, which the dense, concealing shrubbery turned into a trap. He stood shuddering at the narrowness of his escape, observing that there seemed no bottom to the crevasse at all. But it was quite plain that the stout branches which overhung the crevasse might with care be used as a bridge—and Pettigrew was coming up from behind. David could not analyze the motives which forced him to make the attempt. Midway, he took to trembling so it seemed he would never get over, but he did; and Pettigrew followed, saying heartily, and with no derision that David could discover:

"Good work! Now, if I'd been alone, I don't think I'd have thought of that."

So that first day passed, and in it was packed more physical suffering than David had ever known before. By mid-afternoon, he felt he could never finish the day; but a little later a strange renewal of strength came to him, and a lethargic stubbornness of spirit that forced him on. At sunset they came to the foot of a miniature range, and for a while they followed down a stream in a vague and star-lighted world, black beneath the trees. They ate and lay down upon the bank of that stream; and presently, in spite of his stony bed and his aching muscles, a surprising feeling of contentment and satisfaction came to David, a drowsy peace of mind that he could not remember ever having felt before.

BUT then a terrible thing happened. Through the night, from the direction in which they had come, came the sound of breaking underbrush, and a startled exclamation. Moving with incredible swiftness for so old a man, Pettigrew trampled the glowing coals of their camp fire, kicked earth upon it, and drew David away from it.

"No danger, I think, but never can tell," whispered Pettigrew, shouldering his knapsack, with slow, cautious movements. "I expected we'd be followed."

"Followed!" gasped David.

"Yes. Pshaw! I should've told you. This old head of mine slips cogs now an' then. You remember that man that kicked up such a ruckus at the saloon last night?"

"Remember him! Yes."

"Well, I was kind of expectin' him to follow us. You see, you told him your name, an' it's the same name as your father's was, an' you look like him, an' that man——" Pettigrew checked his words upon a note of hatred. "Well, he'd know all right what you're here for, same as I did, 'specially after you'd asked about me."

"And you think he's back there?" breathed David, following Pettigrew as quietly as he could through the concealing clumps of underbrush, away from the river.

"Most likely. Him an' some of his men. He was run out of town, but he could've had us watched by some of the road agents that the authorities ain't got next to. He's the boss of 'em all, they say. Then he'd join 'em in the hills. If it's them, they'll be satisfied just to follow us till we get to the place of the gold. But it might be some other bandits. We'll be safe enough here, though." Pettigrew stopped.

"Can't we throw 'em off the track, some way?"

"Not much chance. Most of them road agents can trail like Injuns, an' they can travel faster 'n we can. Faster 'n I can, anyway." And Pettigrew stretched out restfully in the long, dead grass.

David also lay down, but not, he thought, to sleep. Vague suspicions of Pettigrew came into his mind. Why had Pettigrew not told him of this danger, which would have kept him from the trip, had he known it? What was he hiding about the man called Jake? What mysterious thing was in that knapsack, carefully guarded now under Pettigrew's outflung arm? Why did Pettigrew persist in pretending to discover in him courage, when he'd never had it and never could have it?

No one knew that David was a coward better than himself. The fault lay possibly in his manless, cocoon-soft home, where he had always been guarded from every violent thing by his mother, widowed by violence. Outside his home, he had known jeers in plenty, which had sometimes caused him to fight against his fears, but to little avail. Last night, in the saloon, it seemed for a few minutes that he was free from them, but how soon had the whisky-blown bubble of courage burst! No one before had ever credited him with manhood, and he now began to resent it in Pettigrew, because it again awakened in him desires, the futility of which he'd been learning all his life. "Rabbit," they called him at school. Could a rabbit be brave? It did not seem so to him.

Troubled as he was, however, an irresistible drowsiness stole over him. His sleep was companioned by nightmares; but when he opened his eyes, the stars

were gone, and the sky was showing light through the trees overhead.

He lay for a while without stirring, and in something of the contentment of spirit that he had felt the night before. He turned on his side and glanced toward Pettigrew, lying there hushed and silent, while in the dead abandonment of sleep his face seemed white and sphinxlike. So his father had often wakened, David thought, to find that man at his side.

After a while he got up, stretched himself, and looked about. They were in the very midst of the Rockies. From peak to peak, his gaze wandered, from purpling range to range, now dropping into the dim valley in which he stood, now mounting long, brown slopes to the purpling crests of near-by Titans. He drew a long breath. Awe came upon him, his cheeks were flushed, his eyes moist, and a tingling enthusiasm ran through his blood. Dim memories seemed stirring vaguely within him, as though long-dead pioneer ancestors spoke. This was—this was good!

BUT it was not so good a little later, when the knapsack straps chafed his raw shoulders, when every strained muscle and tendon in him was protesting, and blood was trickling from both his boots. Added to his agony of body was agony of mind, caused by intermittent sounds of crackling underbrush and dislodged, sliding rocks, far behind.

"I can't go on! I can't go on!" he sometimes moaned. But he did go on. It would be worse to go back, to meet those others. Sometimes it seemed that Pettigrew must hear him, but he plodded on, enduring his own physical suffering silently, moved by some fixed purpose at the strength of which David wondered.

Toward noon, they came to a sunless canyon, where trickles of water wet their feet, while above them almost bare precipices towered for dizzy distances. Then the only practicable trail began skirting the precipices to the right, gradually rising higher and higher above the gulch, which presently lay hundreds of feet below. At their left was blank space; at their right, the long, bare, almost inaccessible mountainside, ascending to sky-

piercing heights. Old man Pettigrew, sure-footed as a goat, stalked on ahead, while behind him David moved falteringly, eyes straight ahead, afraid to look up, afraid to look down, lest dizziness overtake him.

At the steepest point, the trail abruptly ended at a slide of loose shale, beginning about three hundred yards above their heads, and extending in a smooth-surfaced, steep slope about half as far downward, from which point there seemed a vertical drop to the bottom of the gulch. Perhaps others had passed that way, but if they had, the sliding stones had closed behind like quicksands, leaving no trace of their passage. This infernal slide was perhaps two hundred yards across, and David wondered, as they approached, how they would ever cross it.

Pettigrew, however, stepped out on its surface without halting. As he did so, a number of loose stones rolled from where he set his feet, down to the lower end of the slide, and from there jumped off into space. Some seconds later, David could hear them hitting the rocks, far below.

David hesitated, shuddering. Pettigrew, not twenty feet ahead, must have caught that hesitation, but he did not turn his head. David's eyes followed his leader with a look of agony; then he forced his feet to follow, too.

His boots dislodged other fragments of shale, which slipped sideways out from under him, and rolled and clattered down. David could not close his ears to the sound, but he walked with a fixed rigidity of expression, and stiff legged, like a man walking on eggs.

The stones rattled and clattered under and beyond him, and under and beyond Pettigrew, and crashed distantly on the rocks at the bottom of the gulch. Then, above this unnerving sound, he heard a deeper one. Above him it was—far above on that smooth surface of loose and menacing shale. He looked up, and his heart leaped into throbbing prominence, as terror seized and choked him, and for a moment paralyzed every nerve. For death swift and sure seemed to be coming upon him; an enormous boulder was bounding down the mountainside, down that ar-

rested cataract of shale, while behind it and beside it came a rattling surface slide of stones.

David stood for a moment frozen in his tracks, and then every muscle in him leaped into brainless action. He could have retreated, could have reached the solid surface of rock he had quit two minutes before. But the boulder was coming directly at him, and to turn was to lose time. Straight forward he leaped, straight toward Pettigrew.

Pettigrew had seen the danger the same instant as had David, and had turned his head to shout a warning to David to retreat. But what he saw was David plunging toward him like a madman, while beneath him the whole surface of shale stirred under his movements.

It was too late now for David to turn, if he were to escape the slide from above, and Pettigrew himself started running forward.

But at his utmost, the old man could not have kept ahead of David, and he ran gingerly, to avoid stirring up the treacherous shale. He would have reached the farther side, and David would have reached it first; but as David passed Pettigrew, cutting around above him, the whole mass of shale stirred and slid away from under his pounding feet. He went down sideways, clutching frantically at the rolling, sliding rock. He passed Pettigrew, who stood for a moment ankle-deep in the stony flood, resisting its movement; then the stones slipped from under his very soles, and he, too, went down, following close behind David on the surface of the slide. But though David was rolled over and over, somehow Pettigrew managed to ride the slide face downward, protecting his knapsack from contact with the rocks.

DAVID'S eyes were closed; he had a moment of kind unconsciousness. His last thought had been of dying, and Death grinned at him when he came to himself again, for he was hanging suspended, somehow, above a yawning abyss. Far below him, hundreds of feet, were the rocks at the bottom of the gulch. On each side of him the flood of stones continued, but in lesser volume, rolling

over the edge of the vertical cliff, dropping with a distant cascade of sound at the bottom.

What was holding him from following? It seemed at first that the shoulder of his shirt had caught on some solid outcropping of rock; then he knew he was dangling in a fashion that forbade that possibility. Twisting his head, he looked up, and met old man Pettigrew's eyes.

It was true that a jutting point of rock divided the slide at this point, projecting a scant foot above it. Across this rock Pettigrew lay, anchored safely, as far as he was concerned. His chest rested upon it, his body was curled around it, and his legs dangled over the edge of the slide. It was his hands that gripped David's shirt, his strength that kept David from falling.

David, weak and faint with fear, closed his eyes again. Pettigrew's voice came to him, as from a great distance:

"Good! Fine, David! If you had struggled now, I couldn't have managed to hold on."

True, if David struggled, and if Pettigrew still held to him, Pettigrew would probably be torn from his balanced position over the rock. But it was no merit in David that he hadn't done so.

"If ye'll wait a minute, just so, an' then climb up."

Wait a minute! David could do nothing else. But as he clung there, quivering, gasping, he was able to think. When Pettigrew had gripped him, on the edge of that deadly drop, had he known that the jutting rock would hold their combined weights, or that his own hold on the rock was strong enough to hold David back? It was impossible that he should have known it. Then Pettigrew, that rhyming barroom bum, had chanced his life—

But come to think of it, *that* Pettigrew had seemingly been left behind at Hardpan.

David's feet were dangling. The wall of the cliff curved inward here, and he could not reach it. He lifted his nerveless hands and caught at Pettigrew's elbows. He strained to raise his own weight.

"I can't. I can't."

"No wonder. Them rocks got you, lad. Wait a minute. You'll be all right."

But David knew it was not the rocks. It was his cowardice that had got him. His muscles were palsied.

He closed his eyes again, and maybe he prayed. Anyway, from some distant God, or a nearer human source, or some reservoir within himself, a needed calmness flowed. The flurry of terror left him.

After a moment, when it seemed to matter not nearly so much, he reached up again, gripped Pettigrew's arms, and lifted himself. Then, slowly, carefully, he climbed up, till he lay across the rock behind Pettigrew.

"Good lad!" said Pettigrew. "You kept cool. It isn't many that—"

"Cool!" cried David, looking up at the point from which he and Pettigrew had slid down. "Cool! You call that cool!"

And it was as though an irresistible urge came upon him to expose to Pettigrew's view all that was contemptible in him. He sat up.

"Cool! Don't tell me that. I'm a coward. I've always been a coward."

"But you're not now, or—"

"A coward, I tell you. You know what happened up there. Always—always the same! Always a coward. And worse. I intended to take that gold, whether or no. No matter if it had been stolen, no matter if— What was my family name to me, my father's name, my mother's wishes—or yours? I intended—"

HE checked himself on the brink of a confession too terrible to be uttered, but he still sat with a white, rigid face, looking off into space, over that deadly gulf into which he had so nearly fallen, and which he did not now seem to see at all. And in Pettigrew's eyes, looking at him, there was an odd mixture of sorrow and joy.

"You intended— Well, that's over now. Now, let's be going." And Pettigrew began to point out the safest way to climb the slide.

They made it and went on again, and for the rest of the day it was, outwardly, as though nothing had happened. But

another besides Pettigrew walked with David that day, excoriating him, flaying him; and when he lay down that night, Shame, biting, blistering, cleansing Shame, was his bedfellow.

And it remained with him for two days more—days in which, always at about the same distance from the rear, came now and then the sounds of patient pursuit, snapping underbrush, falling rock, men's voices; days in which Pettigrew, seemingly so indifferent to obvious dangers, still carried his knapsack as gingerly as though it were a cradle for sleeping Death; days in which David's courage, roused and drawn from the depths of him by that Shame, rose and ebbed, and rose and ebbed again, and his lust for the gold revived.

Days, too, which Pettigrew enlivened somewhat, with snatches from his home-made but inexhaustible repertoire, sung in a voice from which the whisky huskiness had quite departed:

"Then it's ho! boys, ho! Never say you're tirin'—

Take a step, take a step, step an' step again.
The lowlands give us mush, but the mountains
give us iron;

The valleys for the sheep, but the mountains
high for men."

Then they came to the place of the problematical gold of very dubious ownership.

Near the crest of Massacre Mountain they stood, with the morning sun in their faces and a hot wind strong on their backs, looking up the V-shaped notch, whose nearly level floor and precipitous sides were mantled with shrubby living and dead, but all parched and brown from the drought. "Like tinder," David's father had written of it twenty summers before.

But David's thoughts were not now on his father and his inglorious death, nor on the mountain with its overcoat of combustibles, nor even on the lean, deadly, swift-shooting man who presumably headed the pursuit from Hardpan, and who could not be very far away.

"Where now? Where d'ye—" he questioned, looking around with avaricious eyes.

Pettigrew looked at him, and sighed imperceptibly.

"Well, now, let's think what the letter said. 'At the middle of the top of the V'—that'd be about here—at the top of a precipice about a hundred feet high.' He struggled through the crackling underbrush about a hundred feet farther, seemingly sure of his route. 'Here's the precipice.' He stood looking down into a chasm not ten feet across at the top, but with nearly vertical sides, which extended halfway across the mouth of the notch from its northern wall.

"But at the top of it!" David reminded him excitedly. "It must be buried here, somewhere." He stamped the ground in his eagerness. "There's no place else. And we've nothing to dig with!" he wailed.

"Well, no," said Pettigrew slowly, shifting his gaze to the steep mountainside up which they had climbed. "No, I shouldn't say that." He spoke absently, as though his mind was only half on the gold. "The ground was covered with bushes then, too, remember. 'Twould be like an advertisement, tearin' 'em up. I don't think he'd do that."

"Then I don't see—" despaired David.

"I think I do," rejoined Pettigrew, still with his eyes on the brush-covered mountainside. "I knew your father pretty well. I can pretty well guess what he'd do."

HE unslung his knapsack and put it down carefully, pocket side uppermost. Going to the edge of the chasm, he lowered himself feet foremost. The rocky wall was bare of brush, but there were interstices into which he could fit his feet, and projections to which he could cling. Every now and then he looked over his shoulder. The other side of the chasm was not as high as this, and the steep mountainside was still in view.

David lay with his head projecting over the edge of the cliff, watching Pettigrew. Another time, the dizzy drop would have sickened him; another time he could not have endured the spiny points of the underbrush, thrusting into his flesh.

David saw Pettigrew moving about

very cautiously, tugging at intervals at projecting points of rock. He trembled, as he realized what Pettigrew was about. Finally, a rock came loose. Pettigrew shoved it a little outward, and a few seconds later it crashed upon the bottom of the chasm. Another followed, and another.

The sun was blazing, yet cold tremors passed over David. A cache was being revealed in the side of the cliff.

The opening was about four feet high. The lower edge of the solid framing rock projected a little. With his feet upon this projection, Pettigrew bent forward into the hole. He spoke, his voice carefully controlled:

"Yes. It's here."

"Ah-h!" David gasped his relief. Then: "Is it—can you pass it up?" He reached down curving, grasping hands.

"Yes. It's sacked. Be careful, though. It's heavy."

Pettigrew's head and shoulders emerged, and cautiously he dragged out of the cache a squat, bulging, buckskin sack, about twice the size of a man's head. Planting his feet firmly, and with great care to balance himself, he raised the sack over his head. David gripped it and dragged it up, thrilling at the glorious weight of it.

"Five of them, there are," said Pettigrew.

David reached down eagerly for another.

He had a little wait. It took Pettigrew more than a minute to drag each sack out of the cache, and poise it, and thrust it up. An interminable time, to David. So, when the next came up, he paused for a moment to gloat over it. The gold—his father's gold—now his! Then his heart leaped and nearly stopped, as it had when he saw Death rolling upon him down the mountain slide, and he sat paralyzed with horror, staring at the buckskin sack with chilled, stricken eyes.

For there on one side of it was branded deep with some hot point, in scrawling letters that twenty years had not erased:

"*Tennessee Pete. His Gold.*"

In a moment David's head went around as if jerked with a string, and he stared at the other sack. Its upper surface was

bare, but when he rolled it furiously over, there on its side other words mocked him, in letters even more awkwardly formed:

"*Squarehead Charley's Forchune.*"

An inarticulate cry between curse and moan came from David. Then Pettigrew's voice came evenly up:

"Here's another."

David reached over and seized it, then almost dropped it on Pettigrew's head, for plain in view was the name, "*Spanish Jack,*" and below it a crudely drawn, warning dagger.

By now, incoherent thoughts were swirling through David's mind, which disappointment had momentarily stupefied. The gold had never been his father's, could never be his. Those names, scrawled there in jest or pride or sober design to mark separate ownership of the sacks of gold, those accusing, claimant names cried out, "Robbery!" and "Murder!" across twenty years, and made his father a murderer. Made himself and Pettigrew robbers, too, if—

BUT Pettigrew had declared such gold must be "fixed to be forever lost," and that he knew how to do it. But he might think differently now. The murdered men must have heirs. Their claims might offset Pettigrew's concern for his old partner's memory. Anyway, the gold couldn't be David's, unless—

Pettigrew was old. He had lived his life. He was helpless there, on the face of the cliff. No one but him stood between David and the gold. If David let the next sack slip, Pettigrew would go crashing down to death.

"And another, David," said Pettigrew.

David reached down for it, and drew it steadily up. No, no, no! His father had killed—but never he!

This sack was marked tersely: "*Dutch Joe.*" David placed it beside the others, and stared at the four of them somberly. His dream of fortune was ended.

A muttered, angry ejaculation from Pettigrew. A loud report from his revolver, another—*crack! crack!*

Pettigrew had sighted the pursuers—the devil! How had David forgotten them so long? And had Pettigrew lost his head completely, opening fire from his

exposed position on the face of the cliff? So far David got, with his shaking hand going to his revolver butt.

Then a rattle of revolver fire answered Pettigrew's. Lord! How many were firing? Bullets hissed venomously past David's head. One clipped skin from his cheek.

Something went tumbling down the face of the cliff. Was it the fifth sack, or was it Pettigrew? David didn't wait to see.

His brains and his strength went all to his feet. For a hundred yards back into the notch, they carried him swiftly. Then a dead vine tangled them, and he fell.

Once down, in the sheltering underbrush, he dared not get up again. He faced about, and listened.

Revolver fire continued, but none of the bullets came near him. By the sound of it, the attackers were not advancing. Very cautiously, David craned his head above the underbrush, and peered down the slope.

As he did so, there came a nearer revolver report. Smoke curled upward from the edge of the chasm, and was whirled by the wind back toward David. It told him that Pettigrew had not been killed. Somehow, he had gained the top of the ledge, and was holding back the attack.

Pettigrew was guarding the gold—but no, Pettigrew cared little for the gold. Only one other reason occurred to David. Pettigrew was covering David's retreat.

But that same retreat of David's had left Pettigrew hanging like a target on the face of the cliff, when, with a single yank at his hands, David could have had him in the comparative safety of the underbrush.

David thought this over. Then he moistened his lips, and with a stealthy movement, he pulled the revolver from his holster. It was as though he tried to hide the action from himself. He started moving forward, jerkily, with little checks and pauses. He made little progress, but his clothing became soaked, as with the sweat of tremendous exertion.

Then he halted, with expanding nostrils. Like an animal, he sniffed the air, turned his head sidewise to listen. That

smell was not of powder smoke, that crackling not of revolvers. There was fire in the underbrush ahead of him.

A hot gust of wind brushed David's face as, half rising, he chanced another look down the slope. That wind warned him what he would see. A hundred yards ahead of Pettigrew, the flames were leaping high, and to right and left, covering the whole mouth of the notch, were a dozen other separate fires. While David looked, four others flamed up.

Pettigrew had seen the incendiaries working—that was why he had fired so hastily. But it had done no good. They were still scattering brands, and the wind was scattering them, too, swirling burning leaves and bits of dead shrubbery everywhere. Now David could see innumerable tiny blazes.

IN a minute or two they would all be just one unbroken line of flame, which would be swept before the wind up the notch. The narrow gorge would offer no obstacle at all. Assuming that one *might* break through alive, behind it the revolvers yet waited. And even that chance would be very shortly ended by the rising fury of the fire.

Pettigrew, however, might possibly escape. He might climb down the steep wall to the bottom of the chasm and get away to the north, or he might, by crawling swiftly through the underbrush, reach the southern corner of the notch ahead of the flames. David, too, might reach it by running, only he would almost certainly be brought down by a revolver shot. And he would lie there wounded and helpless, waiting, waiting for the flames.

At the thought, David turned to run again. Or rather, he started to turn. He was checked momentarily by the sight of Pettigrew's head and shoulders above the underbrush, as Pettigrew half rose to sling on his knapsack, with that precious, mysterious, seemingly dangerous load.

Then David fled, but, a moment later, turned his head again. From behind him had come four quickly consecutive crashing sounds, easily interpretable. For some reason Pettigrew had shoved the sacks of gold off the cliff to the bottom

of the chasm. Now Pettigrew was running after David, bending down low as he came.

No bullets followed him, however. Indeed, it would have been foolish to waste ammunition on David or Pettigrew now.

For in another minute the whole end of the notch was like a furnace, to which the wind-swept slope was like a tinder-filled flue. Clouds of spark-filled smoke swept ahead of the fire; showers of burning leaves dropped down from the smoke, and wherever they landed, there was fresh combustion. The fire ran faster than the men.

The fire would run just as fast up the steep sides of the notch, where the men must creep and crawl. David saw no hope there, yet there was nothing else to try for, so as he ran he swerved a little to the right, toward a point where the ascent seemed least steep.

Just then, a dull, heavy detonation came from the rear. David glanced back. It seemed as though the flames, leaping the gorge, had touched off a powerful explosive near the point where the gold had been hidden. There was a momentary rift in the wall of flame, with a fan-shaped cloud of burning fragments of brush arising from it. Then the flaming cloud toppled over and was carried ahead by the wind.

Some of those burning brands carried clear over David. Little points of flame appeared in the brush ahead of him. Added terror spurred him, but he could make no better speed.

Through the fast increasing roaring of the flames, he heard Pettigrew calling: "David! David!" There was urgency in the old man's voice. Was he calling for help? David knew he should at least look around to see what was the matter, but he could not.

Just a little ahead of the flames, he reached the wall of the notch. Here the heat was flung back upon itself, and the place was like a fire box. David was choking, coughing, gasping. The smoke tortured him, the oxygenless air robbed him of strength. He started scrambling up with frantic muscular convulsions.

He got a little way. Then a rock slipped from under him, tumbled down,

and he with it. For a moment he felt he could never rise again. Then he did.

A hand gripped his sleeve. He turred his head and, through the whirling smoke, saw Pettigrew.

"No chance that way!" cried Pettigrew. "Come. I know—follow me."

Pettigrew dragged David around, then started running along the wall to the left, toward the end of the notch.

DAVID, nearly blinded by the smoke, had hard work to keep Pettigrew in view. His distress increased, and he stumbled and fell time and again, while actual flames licked at him as he ran. But hope revived in him a little. Pettigrew knew—something. As he had saved David before, so he would again.

Again he would save David, who had again, twice again, imperiled Pettigrew by his cowardice. Once when he had fled, leaving Pettigrew exposed on the bullet-swept face of the cliff; once more when he had run from Pettigrew's voice, hailing him to a safer retreat. And Pettigrew had followed, into greater danger. Why?

Memories of certain of the old man's words came to David then—"like your father"—"might be your father"—"do as your father an' I did"—and, with that clarity of vision that the heights of peril sometimes afford, David saw that he had been from the beginning, to Pettigrew, not himself, but his father, resurrected; that it had been his old friend's ghost that Pettigrew had accompanied the last four days, except when the sordid reality of David's unworthiness tore away the illusion.

But now that illusion must be doubly shattered, for David's father had been proved murderer and thief. Still Pettigrew carried on. Why under heaven did he not abandon such a worthless breed?

David's mind tripped and stumbled over the thought, just as his feet tripped and stumbled over the ground. He went down altogether. He could not get up, he was done for. But Pettigrew was tugging at him again.

"A little way farther. Keep comin'. We can—easy." The rest of Pettigrew's words were carried away by the fiery wind.

But David helped himself a little, and was helped by Pettigrew—onward. Where? David did not know. But suddenly it appeared that they were in a tunnel. A man-made tunnel, for, as David reeled against the side, a piece of rotting timber fell. A tunnel which ran right through from the end of the notch to the opposite side of the mountain, for the smoke was pouring right through, with the flames not far behind.

A tunnel—a mine, perhaps? His father's mine—but no, his father'd had no mine. Those five murdered men had had the mine. But Pettigrew was shouting something.

"It was here the gold come from! A drift leadin' right through, an' no more gold anywhere. Old minin' hist'ry—Them five men——"

Right through, indeed, for there, just a little way ahead, was a square of daylight. A little way ahead was escape—but no; for, turning his head, David could see that the wind-driven flames were already racing along the bottom of the tunnel, littered with inflammable stuff, borne into it by former gales. And the opposite side of the mountain was probably a fire trap, too. No escape, no hope—but there was an astonishing calmness in Pettigrew's voice that gave David hope along another line. For if David's father were indeed guilty, Pettigrew wouldn't be talking like that.

"They mined it," cried David. "Yes, I see that. And then father——"

"No. I was afraid you'd be thinkin' that," Pettigrew replied rapidly. "That's why I'm tellin' you now, because——" David lost part of that sentence. "'Twas Injuns come in then, not your father—that's why it's called Massacre Mountain. The men was found dead an' scalped, an' this drift was found, an' that's all. Nobody even knew who they were, an' it's never been found out. So 'twas nobody's gold at all that your father found hidden somewhere, an' hid again where we found it. Fair enough his, for the findin', an' your gold now."

Pettigrew's words raced fast, but David's thoughts raced faster. How well that puzzling, reticent letter of his father was explained! Of course, he wouldn't

want to shock his Eastern-bred wife with the gruesome origin of their fortune. Not so plain was the reason for Pettigrew's silence back in Hardpan, and even at the ledge when the gold was found; though, of course, in Hardpan he hadn't been sure, and at the ledge, he'd had very little chance to talk. Dimly, however, David sensed another motive. Well, whatever it was, it was all right with him. Anything Pettigrew did was right.

Pettigrew, that brave and good old man! His father's partner! And his father, too, who'd always been but a name and a shadow to David—what a man he must have been to hold Pettigrew's affection over twenty years! A man whose lips, once closed, neither threats, torture nor death could unseal. He, David, was such a man's son! He, David, the coward!

If it had not been for the roaring holocaust outside the tunnel, and the flames pursuing them through it, Pettigrew, running still just a little in advance of David, might have heard the grinding of teeth.

Now Pettigrew turned his head again, and shouted over his shoulder:

"When you get out there, keep goin'! Keep goin' right ahead."

What did Pettigrew mean to do? Ah! An answer came to David, and another question. Again?

FOR suddenly it seemed clear to David that should one choose to die, the other might possibly live. And doubtless it was clear to Pettigrew, too. Again, would David accept the sacrifice—this time the supreme one?

David gasped, not entirely from the run; he sobbed, not entirely from the smoke. He clenched his fists and loosed them, and clenched them yet again. And when Pettigrew stopped and stepped aside, just as he left the tunnel, calling again to David to keep going, David stopped, too, swung around, and caught the old man by the arm.

"It's you that's to keep going," David cried, in a voice choked with fear.

"What d'ye mean?" There seemed real amazement in Pettigrew's tone, and he blinked doubtfully at David through smoke-tortured eyes.

"I mean it's you that's to keep going. Not me. You meant to—do you think I'll let you—again——" David pushed the old man fiercely down the tinder-mantled mountain slope.

Pettigrew checked himself stumblingly, and turned.

"Do I think you'll let me *what*?" he demanded.

"Stay here and fight the fire back, while I run," rejoined David hoarsely. "That's what you meant to do, and it's a good plan, but it's me that's staying. Don't you stop to talk—*run!*"

Pettigrew's grimy face twisted into an odd grimace, or maybe it was a smile.

"T'won't work, lad. It'll break through."

"I can hold it back a long time. There's a gulch down there"—David pointed—"that you can get to before——" Suddenly David felt himself breaking down; he choked back a sob, faced the mouth of the tunnel, out of which dense, illumined smoke was pouring, and menaced the advancing flames with his fists. He kicked up dirt to throw over them, unslung his knapsack to thrash them with. Let them come on! If he got to fighting them, now, he wouldn't stop. But this business of waiting was terrible.

"Hurry!" he cried to Pettigrew, over his shoulder.

"It'd better be me than you," argued Pettigrew. "I'm old, an'——" A note of irrepressible joy was in Pettigrew's voice, coupled with something curiously like sincerity.

"And I'm—I'm——" David didn't know what he wanted to say. His voice rose. "If you don't go now, I'll——" He paused. What threat would not be laughable under the circumstances?

"You're young," continued Pettigrew, "an' it'd better be me than you. 'Specially since—— But it needn't be neither." Now pure exultation had crept into his voice. Unseen by David, he had taken off his knapsack, unfastened the flap, and taken something out. "If this little stick works like its brother did, back there where the gold was, then it needn't be neither."

David turned and saw Pettigrew holding something in his hand that looked

like a giant candle. He knew what it was the same instant that Pettigrew thrust him to one side of the tunnel mouth and flung the dynamite in. As he flung it, Pettigrew also dodged sidewise to the shelter of the cliff. But there had been no danger. Though the ensuing explosion shook the mountaintop, nothing but a great burst of acrid smoke came out of the tunnel. It drifted away, and no more smoke followed.

"That was why I wanted you to keep on runnin'," said Pettigrew mildly; "so I could use the dynamite. But I'm glad you didn't. Well, that's put a stopper in there. Now, after we get our wind, we'd better backfire a little, because the fire'll be comin' over the top of the mountain pretty soon, an' around the sides. But with the way the wind's cut off here by the mountain, we can backfire all right. Probably could've saved ourselves, even without the dynamite."

"You carried that all the way——" gasped David.

"Didn't know I had it, did you?" chuckled Pettigrew. "I was afraid 'twould make you nervous, so I didn't tell. I thought 'twould come in handy, in case I wanted to bury something, which 'twas quite in the cards I might, considerin' we'd most likely be followed—an' considerin' some other things as well."

"You mean, if the gold *had* proved to be stolen gold?" David inquired, with a great and almost successful effort to equal Pettigrew's calmness.

"Yes. You wouldn't have wanted it, David, you wouldn't, really. And then, there was something else."

"Something else?"

But Pettigrew had struck a match, and was stooping to start a backfire. He was perfectly deliberate.

"Then you did save the gold from the bandits, and bury it back there? That was the explosion I heard?"

"Yes. It's pretty deep, too, I reckon," said Pettigrew, "considerin' that I lowered the dynamite with a string down one of them heat cracks—you remember them—an' it appeared to me, lookin' back as I run, that the whole side of the gorge caved in on top of the gold when the

fire touched the dynamite off. A job"—his voice took on a wistful tone—"a job you an' I will have, diggin' it outa there, if you'll let me help you for day's wages. A man's job, that'll be. An' not so much like—easy gold, either."

Then David, looking at him, thought he knew the meaning of that undefined "something else," and smiled at the old man's fear of what "easy gold" would do for him. Smiled, and then quit smiling, as he recalled what he'd been four days before when the old man's fear was formed; then looked graver still, when he realized that the man he was now, or thought himself to be, had existed about fifteen minutes. The road to manhood was longer than that, he told himself with cold logic—longer and harder even than the road from Hardpan had been.

"And you'll help me travel it——" He caught himself. "I mean, you'll help me get out the gold?"

"Yes, I thought I'd like to, just as if you was your father. You see, the last four days, it's been like that. And I've been like—like I used to be. I was get-

tin' pretty well run down. Maybe it'll keep on helpin'."

"And maybe you'll——" David was about to suggest that maybe Pettigrew would substitute somewhat for that father whom David had never known, and always missed, but never with such a sense of deprivation as now; but with that thought, another occurred to him, which tightened his muscles and put iron into his voice. "But first, before we get out the gold, before we do anything, I've got to find that Scanlan, that man that murdered my father, and——"

He didn't finish the sentence, and, in fact, he never finished it, for old Dan Pettigrew interrupted, apologetically:

"I'm sorry, David, but I got ahead of you there. You see, that lean man was Jake Scanlan, an' I got him back there at the place of the gold. 'Twas that that made me so slow a-leavin'. I wouldn't leave without him. You won't blame me, will you? I knew, with him gone, the others won't bother much when we go back for the gold—and besides, I've been twenty years waitin' to know I'd a right to kill him!



THE ULTIMATE CAKE TAKER

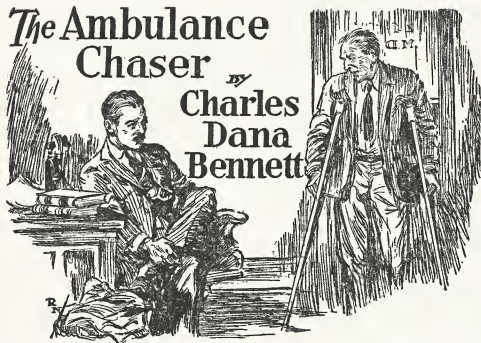
NO doubt we are often inclined to say, without any substantial justification: "They didn't do things like that in the old days," or, "Those things are not done outside of the United States." But it does seem reasonable to say that there have been few times in the past when a considerable portion of the populace was as anxious as it is at present to force the rest of the people to observe, in every department of living, no matter how personal, those "high" standards which the considerable portion believes will bring us all to "the higher and finer life." And surely this idealistic class is, just at present, more enthusiastic and more potent in the United States than in any other country.

All of which is intended as a graceful, though not insignificant, preliminary to the announcement that the Village Board of Scarsdale, New York, the other day passed unanimously an ordinance prohibiting the operation of hot-dog stands and peanut stands within the village limits. The avowed purpose of the ordinance is to protect the children of Scarsdale from themselves, the sole woman member of the board citing the opinion of the chief high-school coach that hot dogs and cold drinks were ruining the training of his teams. But there was no mention of provision for adult hot-dog munching.

On guard, fellow freemen!

The Ambulance Chaser

by
**Charles
Dana
Bennett**



Fredrick Bush, M. D., was doing his honest best to make enough money to ask Bett to marry him. But Harlan called him an ambulance chaser, and tried to frame him.

WHEN Fredrick Bush, fresh from medical school, gave a certificate of disability to an Italian laborer, he started something. The fact that this allowed Graco to win damages from the Realmont Street Railway Company was not especially significant. Nor was it an unusual gesture of fate which caused two more casualties to apply for certification within the month. But two weeks later, when his testimony secured an award for the victim of an automobile accident, the jolt came. The man had faked his injuries. Word spread like wildfire through the ghetto. Doctor Fredrick Bush was an "ambulance chaser."

Now, listening to the heart-rending story of Joe Wiluski, Doctor Bush was coldly unmoved. Also, he surveyed the simulated misery of Mr. Wiluski without sympathy.

"There's nothing the matter with you, Joe, and you know it as well as I do." The doctor's tone was impatient.

Joe stared impassively down at a worn place in the office carpet. He nodded glumly.

"Maybe dat's right, doc," he muttered.

A shaft of noon sunlight slid over the top of the tenement, pressing closely against the back yard of the old brownstone house and filtering through dusty windows to light up rows of shabbily worn medical books. The sun evidently gave Joe heart. He looked up at the doctor, who sat moodily tapping a pencil against the battered desk.

"Lookit here, doc," he said; "youse give 'Pink' Gesspi a certificate, an' went on de stand fer him, an' he gits big damages from de car company. Him an' his wife and kids is on 'Easy Street' now; or dey would be if Pink hadn't gone and shot de wad on a lame mule in de Belmont sweepstakes. An' youse give certificates to 'Tommy de Mick,' an' 'Rat' Ferris, an' dat bloke 'Gypo Frank,' who weren't hurted at all, only he gives a good stall; an' dey all gits big jack fer dere inj'ries.

Dat's all de truth, doc, and youse knows it. C'me on an' be a sport, doc, an' gimme a certificate. I gotta turrible pain in me side, doc. I got internal inj'ries, doc—dat's what dey is." Joe attempted a dismal look.

The young doctor stopped his play with the pencil. His face wore a troubled expression.

"See here, Joe; you've got me all wrong," he told his customer. "In the first place, those other fellows you spoke about were all really injured, and had damages coming to them—that is, all except Gypo, and he fooled me. He came in and told me he had severe pains directly beneath his right ribs, on which he had fallen when the auto hit him. I thought he might be trying to put one over on me, but he was so insistent in his complaints that, with the examination I could give him—for Gypo couldn't afford X rays and fluoroscopes and other laboratory tests—I was convinced that he was really internally injured. You see, Joe, I have to make a great part of my diagnosis from what a man tells me, and I can't always tell whether he's lying. Gypo was lying, and I'm sorry to say he got away with it."

Joe had relapsed into glumness. Doctor Bush took to his tapping operations. He was a man of twenty-eight, of medium height, with closely cropped, sandy hair, and an aspiring mustache which he didn't like, but tended out of deference to his profession. Working his way through college, he had somehow found time to play at his favorite sport, football, and had thereby acquired a broken nose, which had never quite properly mended. Completing the struggle through medical school, he was given small respite. His father—his mother had died when he was a baby—departed a world that had presented him with but one great joy, his son Fredrick, shortly after the boy's graduation; and the newly created M. D. hurried from the funeral to take over a poor practice, hardly come by through a few saved dollars, in the slum section of Realmon't. Now, the doctor looked at his vis-à-vis through kindly gray eyes grown somewhat shrewd from close contact with the great unwashed.

"Why don't you be decent about this business, Joe?" he asked. Then, as the other persevered in his sullenness: "The car people have been fair in the matter; they've given you compensation for the time you've been out of work, paid your doctor's bill, and given you a little bonus besides. As I've said already, and you've practically admitted, there's not a thing wrong with you, now. I know darned well you can get your old job back this minute; so go on and do it, like an honest man."

Joe picked up his hat from the floor beside his chair.

"Guess I'll have ta git annuder medico," he said morosely.

"I'm afraid you will, if you expect me to help you shake down the street-car people."

Halfway to the door Joe turned for a moment.

"I always did t'ink dat youse was de poor guy's friend?" he half questioned.

"I am 'de poor guy's friend,' as you so mellowly put it, Joe, but also I make some casual attempt to be honest in my practice—and, furthermore, I'm not a grafter." The doctor stepped over to one of the bookcases and began to scan the titles.

"Tell your wife to bring Maria here to-morrow for her dressing," he called over his shoulder to the departing Joseph.

"Yes, sir," replied the latter and closed the door. Walking somberly down the hall and out to the street, he grumbled to himself:

"Even if he wouldn't gimme de certificate, he sure is de white guy, anyhow."

THAT evening Fredrick Bush, M. D., changed his rôle to Fredrick Bush, timorous lover. Dressed in his best suit—which Moses, the corner tailor, kept nicely pressed in lieu of paying his outstanding medical debts—Bush directed his footsteps westward to "Swelltown" and the parental domicile of Betty Franklin. As he walked briskly out of the East Side and through the business district of the city, his thoughts tripped backward to the morning. It would be easy to give men like Joe certificates of disability. They had families to support; and juries

were extremely susceptible to the pathos of a faded woman, with a shawl thrown over her head and holding a whimpering baby in her arms, carefully placed by council in close proximity to the alleged cripple. The twelve good men and true were not much interested in the validity or nonvalidity of a doctor's certificate. Such matters were technical, and not to be understood by laymen. If the doctors for the car company said the plaintiff wasn't suffering, why, it was their business to say that. They were paid to belittle the injuries of a poor workman with a family to support, in order to save the street-car people money. So would the jury argue to itself, and almost certainly a verdict for the plaintiff would be brought in. There was little, if any, risk of being called up for malpractice; and the profits to be had through false certification were large.

For the thousandth time, all this went through the young doctor's head, as he approached the Franklin home. He needed money, needed it badly, for he could not ask the potentially rich Betty to marry him on bright prospects and the pitifully meager competence he was now deriving from his poverty-stricken clients. Not that Betty was the kind of girl who thought of money—Heaven forbid!—but at the same time—Fredrick's thoughts trailed off again. If he could only get together enough money to buy an interest in Jarlin's Highland Street practice; then everything would be slick. But he could not, and would not, do the good old melodramatic crook stuff, no matter how safe, even for Betty.

He spent a miserable evening in the austerity of the Franklin drawing-room, cheerlessly contemplating his predicament, beneath a haphazard flow of conversation with Betty. That young woman devoted her small self heroically to the task of revivifying her caller. Her wide, brown eyes laughed while she shook her head solemnly, and the light glinted from golden hair. Fredrick remained unresponsive, and his hostess was distinctly piqued. He said good night early, and on the front doorsteps ran smack into Ralph Harlan, who was on the point of pressing the bell. The two men bowed coldly, and

Fredrick stumbled hopelessly off down the street with Betty's, "I'm so glad to see you, Ralph," chiming in his ears.

In their undergraduate days, Fred Bush and "Ralty" Harlan were the proverbial enemies. Harlan was the son of a wealthy man, and he carried the onus as though it were a distinction. The trouble began in their freshman year when Ralty, much the worse for liquor, had come into a cafeteria where Fred was working, and insulted one of the waitresses. Fredrick forcefully and efficiently ejected the young bouncer, and the feud was on. It surged intermittently through the four succeeding years—on the athletic field, in classroom; and some honest drama was even introduced into the Dramatic Club when, in a stage duel, the two battled to a knock-out before an hysterically applauding audience. The play, unhappily, was left without its intended end, but the spectators were, for once, completely satisfied.

After graduation Harlan drifted into law school; and the quarrel had practically vanished, only to be renewed when it came to light that they were both, appropriately or inappropriately, as one may choose, courting Betty Franklin.

RALPH HARLAN stalked angrily along after his hostess into the drawing-room that had so shortly been vacated by his rival. His person exuded the aromatic odors of bootleg gin, and, as he bumped himself down into a deeply upholstered chair, he growled:

"I see that damned ambulance chaser's been here, again."

Miss Franklin looked her surprise.

"That what?" she inquired.

"That fellow, Bush."

"Yes, I know; but what do you mean, 'ambulance chaser?'"

"Oh, a fellow who follows ambulances when they are called to street accidents. They get the name of the chap that's been injured, and then hound around after him to sue the street-car company, or the auto owner, or whoever it was that knocked 'em down. That's what this guy Bush does. He chases the ambulances and then gives the injured party a certificate of disability, and appears on the witness

stand sometimes to testify how badly the plaintiff's been injured. Usually it's some guy who's only been bruised up a bit, but with Bush assisting and egging him along, he collects large damages; and then Bush gets a big rake-off. The fellow's getting rotten rich with his dirty work!"

Miss Franklin appeared stunned.

"Why, I thought——" she began.

"Yah! I know you think he's the original church mouse, but he isn't. Why, in the last year he's been directly or indirectly connected with more than twenty cases that I've tried, and with his crooked certificates, or his testimony, the plaintiff's won every single one of them. I tell you he's made one neat little pile!"

Light commenced to dawn for Betty.

"Now I think I'm beginning to understand," she told Ralty, demurely. "He's helped to beat you in court and you're peeved——"

Harlan realized then that he had overplayed his hand. He turned the conversation to other topics, and, having been refused as a prospective benedict for another time, he took a somber departure. Obviously, it was not a good night for masculine callers at the Franklin ménage.

After Ralty had, with adroit clumsiness, missed a tumble down the front steps and gone on his way, Miss Franklin strayed up to her room, wondering. Evidently Ralty was sore at Fred because he, Ralty, was losing cases and because——

Well, anyway, there had always been a coldness between the two men. She had heard rumors about college. But, even if Ralty was jealous, there might be some truth in what he said about his enemy's making money. She had always supposed that Fred never said anything because he felt that he was too poor. So she trailed off to sleep, with the resolve that she would find out a few things.

NEXT morning Harlan sat in his private cubicle, in the legal department of the Realmont Street Railway Company, and nursed a grouch and a headache. A timid knock sounded at the door. Harlan snarled, "Come in!" and waited. A tow-headed office boy peered cautiously around the door.

"Mr. Olsen wants tuh see yuh in his

office," he informed, and precipitately closed the door.

Harlan had been expecting the summons, but he was none the better pleased at its reception. Gluing a stony expression to his countenance, as befitted a young and ambitious corporation lawyer, he directed his way to his superior's sanctum.

Mr. Olsen, tilted back at a precarious angle in his swivel chair, looked up at his caller over the end of a black cigar which was undergoing a meticulous mastication. His cynical eyes contained a hard clarity, and he was possessed of a distressing faculty for always knowing the truth about things, and for speaking it, occasionally. This morning he was in a candid mood.

"Harlan," he said directly, "you've been losin' too many cases lately; you're becomin' a reg'lar damned luxury 'round here—not an asset."

Harlan winced, and renewed his stony stare.

"You see, it's this way," he told his chief. "This fellow Bush, with his lying certificates and testimony, makes such an impression on judges and juries, with his baby eyes and whimper, that they all fall for him. He's the monkey wrench in the wheels. And besides, every one likes to soak the car company."

"Rot!" retorted the corporation lawyer. "This bird Bush is as honest as a year of long days, and you know it. So do the judges and juries. What's the use of kiddin' yourself?"

Ralty disagreed.

"He's just a low crook!"

"Slush!" grunted Olsen, exasperated.

Harlan adopted a pose of cold disapproval.

"The point being," continued Olsen, after a moment's pause, "that it's up to us, or rather you, to discredit the fellow. I tell you again that he's perfectly honest, and I mean it. You've got to figure out some way to frame the man, and have him disbarred from further practice by the State Medical Association, on the grounds of fraud. It's up to you. Bush is probably a nice lad, but he's too expensive for our business."

Harlan stamped back to his cubicle, with an increased neuralgia.

That same morning, after having dressed the hand of Joe's Maria, inspected half a dozen patients for everything except their owing bills, and attended a clinic, Doctor Bush seated himself at the pick-up luncheon prepared by his elderly housekeeper. He was in the middle of a bite of thick cheese, when he suddenly remembered. He hurried to the telephone, his mouth still a trifle crowded, and experienced a strange difficulty in making central understand him.

By the time Betty Franklin came to the other end of the wire, the impedimenta had been vanquished.

"Hello," Bush said, "is that you, Betty? I say, you know last night I forgot something. . . . Yes, I said, 'forgot something.' . . . No, not my gloves. . . . Oh, I did. . . . What I meant was . . . what I mean to say is. . . . I say, Betty, will you go to the circus with me to-morrow afternoon?"

The reply apparently was satisfactory, for Fredrick hung up the receiver with a beatific expression lighting his face. Young men in love are humorless creatures, more than prone not to comprehend the ridiculous. Note: Adam made this observation concerning one of his sons.

Now the cogs began to click more swiftly. Ralty Harlan, driving his roadster menacingly along a suburban roadway, observed a large billboard, on which many gay circus posters flaunted. Skidding his car to the curb, he gazed, entranced, and suddenly regained his overbearing debonair demeanor. He rushed back to his office to impart the glad tidings to Mr. Olsen, and received from that pleased lawyer a pat on the back and the admonition: "It sounds like a good idea, but watch your step."

Then he hustled off to the circus.

Miss Franklin and young Doctor Bush departed the Main Show, at its conclusion, in a gathering mist of misapprehensions. Under cover of the roll of the big drums and the clown's antics, Betty had demurely remarked:

"Ralty Harlan says you've made a great deal of money in the last year,

Fred. I'm awfully glad for your sake—I know you've had a hard pull."

Her companion stiffened perceptibly.

"Unhappily, Mr. Harlan is very badly informed," he told her.

"Then you haven't made a lot of money?"

"No, Betty, I most certainly have not!" The stiffness ebbed a little. "I only wish to Heaven I had. Gee! Betty, with five thousand dollars I could buy a share of old Jarlin's Highland Street practice; and Jarlin's a nice chap to work with. Then I'd be able to support—then I could ask whether——" His voice trailed off wistfully.

"Then you could what?" urged the girl.

Fredrick shook his head.

"Oh, what's the use?" he said.

At that opportune moment the mule planted a solid pair of heels on a padded portion of the clown's anatomy; a thunder of appreciative mirth arose; and Fredrick looked disconsolate.

"What's the use?" he said, again, half to himself. "If I could only get that five thousand together, I could——"

Betty was annoyed.

"You could what?" she repeated.

But the young man would give her no satisfaction. He would only shake his head.

Thus, they left the big tent, partially estranged. However, at sight of the elephants tethered along a line of pickets, Betty brightened.

"I want," she demanded, "to feed the elephants peanuts."

Fredrick smiled a little at that, and went off in search of the peanut vender. When he returned, after an interminable time, his gloom apparently had deepened, and he wore an air of strained preoccupation. Feeding the pachyderms became a woeful business, and Miss Franklin brought it to an abrupt conclusion. They passed the pink-lemonade stand without deigning to give it a glance, and conducted an almost speechless return to Betty's home.

At the entrance, a realization of the situation oozed in upon the distraught Fredrick. He made a futile attempt to apologize, but Betty was too deeply hurt, and the two parted, both suffering from ex-

treme internal disturbances, patently not amenable to medical treatment.

ON the afternoon succeeding the circus debacle, that odious animal, a "mutual friend" of Harlan's and the doctor's, made a long detour through strange streets. Finding Fredrick's combined home and office at last, Mr. Peters sank with a grateful sigh into the proffered chair.

"My Lord, Bush!" he exclaimed. "You certainly keep yourself under the bushel basket. I thought I'd never find my way here!"

"Sorry," was the laconic response. Fredrick had always disliked the man. There was something about his spats and his stick and his double-breasted coat that distinctly did not bear up well. And now there was something in the air that positively made him loathe the fellow.

Mr. Peters was not the person to be discouraged by abruptness.

"You know Ralty Harlan, old Ralty Harlan," he gabbled. "Well, I met the old boy this noon at luncheon, and he told me he was engaged to Betty Franklin. I thought of you right away. Knew you'd known old Ralty for a long time, and I kinda thought you were soft on Betty yourself. Weren't you, now? Come, 'fess up!"

Fredrick was stunned for the instant, but he rallied himself.

"Nice of you to come and tell me," he said frigidly. "Very nice of you——"

When his visitor had appeared, Fredrick, observing the call was social and not professional, had escorted him into the dreary excuse for a drawing-room, at the front of the house. Now, as he gazed hopelessly through the narrow window into the swarming street, he was brought viciously down to earth. Mr. Peters, who had been glancing surreptitiously at his watch, all at once nudged his host powerfully in the ribs and pointed toward the crowded thoroughfare.

From a rapidly passing street car a figure plunged, headfirst, onto the pavement, and rolled in strange contortions into the gutter. There it lay, weirdly inert after such a pandemonium of motion, while the car shrieked to a stop.

Automatically, the doctor and his caller started to their feet and rushed for the front door. Opening it, they stared out on tragedy.

The stalled street car stood directly before the house, and a quickly increasing group of people were gathered about the huddled figure on the pavement. An excited conductor was intermittently urging the crowd, "Keep back and give him air," and asking in the next breath for the names and addresses of witnesses. Halfway down the block the motorman was legging it, evidently bound for the corner store to call an ambulance.

Fredrick descended the steps, and crossed the sidewalk in long strides. He pushed his way through the crowd.

"Here," he said, "I'm a medical man. Some of you fellows give a hand and help carry the chap to my office."

There was instantly a murmur of approval, and, several of the crowd assisting, the victim was carried into the small back room and placed on the office operating table. The doctor made a hasty examination. After having witnessed the terrific fall, he gravely suspected that his patient was in need of undertaking, rather than medical services. But, to his amazement, except for the fact that the man was seemingly unconscious, there were only a few minor contusions about his head and hands. When the ambulance arrived to take the casualty off to the city hospital, these had been dressed, and Fredrick was washing his hands. Abruptly he bethought himself of the mutual friend, but that airy individual had taken his departure.

FOR a week young Doctor Bush scanned the society columns for an announcement of Betty's engagement, but his scrutinies went unrewarded. He went through his daily work half heartedly, and each night resisted the temptation to use the telephone. He simply could not, would not, call the girl. She had decisively shown him that he was not wanted. His prospects didn't seem especially bright at the moment.

Then, on a humid Thursday morning, he answered a ring at the front-door bell—he was miles removed from having a

secretary-nurse—and ushered into his office a dejected-looking figure, supporting itself with the aid of crutches. Fredrick assisted his patient to a chair, and seated himself directly opposite him, behind the desk.

"What seems to be the trouble?" he asked sympathetically.

The man looked up. His face bore a haggard expression.

"I guess you don't remember me?" Then, not waiting for an answer, he went on: "My name's Toole. I'm the man who fell off the street car in front o' here about a week ago. They give me your address at the hospital. Said you had me brought in here and bandaged up. I come around to thank you and find out how much my bill is."

The doctor scanned his man more carefully.

"Oh, yes, I remember you now," he murmured. He pondered for a moment. "I guess you owe me a couple of dollars but"—glancing at the man's poor clothing—"don't let it worry you. Any time when you get back on your feet will be all right."

Toole nodded his thanks.

"I'm pretty hard pressed right now," he admitted. "It's right decent of you, doc. You see, it's sorta this way: I work over'n the railroad yards, bumpin' freight cars, y'know, an' I don't expect I'll be able to get back on the job for a long time. Doc, I got internal inj'ries, I guess. I got a fierce pain that'll hardly let me walk. It's right across here"—Toole indicated his side below the ribs—"an' that's what I come to see you about—that an' the bill—" The man broke off to indulge in a painful grimace, and pressed his hand to his side.

"Yes?" prompted the doctor.

"I got a lawyer," Toole explained, "an' I'm goin' to sue the car company. These here big corporations think they can go round knockin' honest workin' men for loops, and then not pay up. Doc, I'm badly busted up, an' I want that you should examine me an' find out what's the matter; an' then gimme a certificate, or whatever you call it, an' maybe go on the stand for me. I'll see that you don't lose nothin' by it," he hastened to add.

Fredrick rose, and went over to the man's side.

"Let me help you onto the operating table, and we'll have a look," he said. Then, as Toole groaningly got to his feet, he continued: "Please don't make a mistake; if you're really hurt, I'll be glad to help you; it's not a case of 'losing anything by it.'"

"Honest, doc, I'm hurt an' hurt bad," Toole answered, as he stretched himself wincingly on the office operating table.

For a week Doctor Bush continued his examinations of Toole. The patient was absolutely consistent in his complaints, and always moaned when certain parts of his anatomy were prodded. Finally, the doctor was convinced.

"I'm as sure as I can be that you're really internally injured," he informed his patient.

Toole brightened perceptibly.

"Then you'll gimme a certificate an' go on the stand for me?" he questioned.

The doctor nodded assent.

The month that elapsed before the case of John Toole versus the Realmont Street Railway Company was a dreary one for Fredrick Bush. Not a word had come from Betty Franklin, and every day the young doctor was becoming more despondent. However, with the opening of the trial, the cogs began to hum away at a merry pace.

There was something ominous in the way both the lawyers for the plaintiff and for the defense disregarded the selection of talesmen. A few curt questions from either side, and the juror was told to take his seat. Ralty Harlan appeared in an exalted frame of mind, and went sneeringly about the courtroom, now and again casting supercilious glances at Fredrick, who sat at the plaintiff's table.

TOOLE'S evidence was rapidly presented. Witnesses of the accident said, rather lamely, that the "death car" had been going at a terrific pace, and that Toole had fallen off because of the overcrowded condition of the rear platform. They were not convincing. A sinister air hung over the entire business.

When Doctor Bush was called, he testified that he had seen the plaintiff's tre-

mendous fall, and considered it a miracle that any man could live through such an accident; that he had had the plaintiff brought into his office, and treated him for minor skin abrasions before an ambulance had arrived to take him to the city hospital. He said that when the man had returned on crutches a week later, he hardly recognized him; that he had been requested to make an examination for internal injuries, and that, following a week of careful exploration, he was convinced that certain damages had been done. He went into a technical discussion.

The cross-examiner asked one question:

"Was Doctor Bush utterly convinced of Toole's internal injuries?"

Surprisingly, Toole's attorney did not object; and the doctor remarked succinctly that he had already said as much, but admitted that internal injuries were always somewhat a matter of conjecture. The case for the plaintiff was ended, and Harlan rose to speak for the company.

"It is the intention of the defense," he informed the judge, pointedly ignoring the jury, "to demonstrate that gross and palpable fraud has been perpetrated. This man Bush has become a notorious ambulance chaser, your honor, and it is high time that a stop be put to his nefarious activities." Then Harlan called, as his first witness, Mr. Peters, the mutual friend.

That individual slipped mincingly from an obscure corner of the room and took the stand. He testified that he had been present at Doctor Bush's home on the day of the accident; that he had seen the doctor rush hungrily out at the first clamor of wreck; and that, furthermore, he had seen the doctor extract from the supposedly unconscious man's pocket a card, which undoubtedly bore the victim's address. This, it was suggested, might have been for future reference.

The preliminary witnesses evidently were brought on merely to cast anathema at the doctor and his reputation. Then came the physicians for the car company. They testified that they had closely examined the plaintiff and found nothing wrong with him. Then Harlan exploded the bomb.

"Your honor," he said, again addressing the judge and disregarding the jury, "I am going to ask you to throw this case out of court, on very simple grounds. The evidence so far submitted for the defense has been superficial—evoked for the sole reason of demonstrating the perfidy of the plaintiff's medical adviser. It simply remains for the defense to demonstrate irrefutably the disingenuousness of Doctor Bush.

"Your honor, it so happens that our investigations have brought to light the fact that the man Toole, the plaintiff, makes it a part of his business to fall off street cars, and then sue their owners for damages. We have sworn records of his connivings in this field of endeavor throughout a dozen cities in America. Your honor, that man was no more injured by his plunge from the street car than was the cement pavement, and Doctor Bush knows it. The man, your honor, is an acrobat from Hesbeck's Circus!"

Consternation filled the courtroom.

The judge turned a startled look at the young doctor whom he had always liked and had always been extremely inclined to trust. The jurors muttered audibly among themselves, and Harlan sent a look of nasty triumph in the direction of his rival. Fredrick sat with bowed head, obviously altogether too stunned to defend himself.

The court cleared its throat.

"These are very grave charges that you prefer, Mr. Harlan," he said. "On the evidence so far presented, I am inclined to dismiss the case and recommend grand jury proceedings in investigation of the acts of Doctor Bush and the plaintiff. However, I feel that the doctor should be given some opportunity to answer these serious charges, and, therefore, I shall adjourn court until ten o'clock tomorrow morning, when I shall expect Doctor Bush and the plaintiff to be prepared with whatever statement or defense that they have to make."

Fredrick left the courtroom, with lowered eyes. In the corridor he heard a burly policeman growl to a companion: "Dey got dat guy, cold!" He hurried on, out into the drizzly bleakness of autumn twilight.

WHEN court was called the next morning, Fredrick Bush, M. D., marched behind the rail, followed by a motley assemblage. Joe was there, in a conspicuously clean shirt and a red necktie. He headed a delegation made up of workingmen, obviously tidied for the occasion by anxious wives. Next came an array of medical talent led by the president of the State Medical Association, glorious in top hat and cutaway. The rear guard was composed of several young lawyers, men who had been classmates of Fredrick's during the football years. This miniature army very patently upset the debonair Mr. Harlan. He beckoned an attendant and sent him scuttling for a telephone.

For a man laboring beneath ugly skies, Doctor Bush did not appear in a distressed humor. Perhaps he had reason, for that morning the postman had delivered a faintly scented missive, bearing a girl's handwriting on the envelope. Now, Fredrick held this, still unopened, inside his coat pocket. It made him a trifle nervous; nevertheless, it was some kind of word out of the surrounding murkiness—and he could wait until the trial was over before discovering the news.

There was a low-voiced discussion among the representatives of the legal profession, and then, in quick order, Joe and his compatriots were called to the stand. Each and every one deposed and asserted feelingly that they had, after various accidents, come to Doctor Bush and asked him to certify them as disabled; that that young gentleman, knowing full well that they were in perfect health, had told them to go to the devil, and that he was no grafter. They all made excellent character witnesses with their stumbling speech, and their naïve exhibition of themselves as seekers after loot in order to impress the fact that—"Doc Bush, he's honest; he's de white guy!"

The president of the State Medical Association entered the box. He bowed affably to the judge and the various legal luminaries.

"I should prefer to give my testimony in my own way," he stated; and, hearing no dissent, he continued: "Exactly six

weeks ago, on August 13th, Doctor Fredrick Bush came to my office and made an exceedingly startling disclosure. It appears that, on the day previous, he had attended a performance of Hesbeck's Circus then playing here, in company with a young lady, whose name he did not care to divulge.

"Following the performance, on a quest, I believe, after peanuts to feed the elephants, he overheard a conversation that was taking place behind the canvas of one of the side shows. Doctor Bush repeated to me at length what he had heard, but I shall give you only the purport. Briefly, the late plaintiff, Toole, and the attorney, Mr. Harlan, were conspiring to—I believe the expression is 'frame'—Doctor Bush. It was to be arranged that Doctor Bush should see Toole fall from the street car, and later Toole was to apply for treatment. Toole, with his acrobat's ability to take a terrific tumble without injuring himself, was counted on to impress the doctor with the fact that he might well be severely hurt, even before an examination was made. Doctor Bush assured himself of the identity of the conspirators by peeping around the corner of the tent flap, and the next day he came to call on me.

"Now, your honor, it may appear strange that immediate complaint was not made, and steps to press that complaint taken; but it seemed advisable to myself and to some of the other members of the association upon whom I called"—he indicated the phalanx of physicians grouped about the table—"to allow the matter to be brought to a head by the conspirators, in order to vindicate the often unhappily maligned honesty and good faith of our calling.

"Your honor, my colleagues and myself advised Doctor Bush to revive the late plaintiff, and make as thorough an examination of him as was possible. Then, if the fellow was consistent in his complaints, always reacted in the same manner to the same pain stimuli; in short, continually told a straightforward story of, in the language of the layman, 'the place it hurt,' why then, your honor, we advised Doctor Bush to give the man a certificate and appear for him.

"Our reason was that it is the business of the medical profession to diagnose the ailments of humanity to a great extent through what the patient tells his physician. If you come to me and tell me that you have a headache, I can question you about the kind of ache that you have, how often it recurs, and so on; *but* there is absolutely no way for me to tell that you have no headache at all, if you say you have one. A doctor, your honor, is a physiologist, and *not* a mind reader!"

No further witnesses were needed. The judge glared angrily down from his perch.

"The attorney for the Realmont Street Railway Company asked that I dismiss this case, on the grounds of fraud and collusion," he vociferated. "I hearby grant that request. The case is dismissed. The court finds that the Realmont Street Railway Company, through its attorney, has conspired to defeat the ends of justice. The court finds the Realmont Street Railway Company in contempt of court, and fines the said company five hundred dollars. The court also advises that the grand jury and the State Bar Association immediately proceed to an investigation of the methods of the attorneys of said company."

It was devastating. The judge turned to Doctor Bush.

"Young man," he commanded, "I strongly advise you to enter suit for heavy damages against the street-car people for defamation of character. The court is adjourned!"

In the courthouse hall, Fredrick was surrounded by congratulatory friends. Joe kept muttering: "He's de white guy, even if he wouldn't gimme a certificate!"

And the president boomed out words about, "A splendid test case!"

AFTER the excitement had somewhat abated, Fredrick managed to slip into the quiet of the library room. There he pulled out the morning's missive and eagerly tore it open. He read:

DEAR FREDDY: I'm for you whether you win or lose! I only found out to-night that Ralty Harlan had made you think that I was engaged to him. I never was—nor had any intentions of being. I was *mad* at you for not telling me what you *could* do with five thousand dollars. Please, won't you come to see me soon, and tell me that you *could* without it? B.

"Dear Freddy" started hastily for the exit without his hat, but possessed of a gladly thumping heart. In the doorway he encountered the senior attorney for the car company, Mr. Olsen. That hardened personage caught him by the arm.

"Hey!" he cried. "Hold on! Wait a minute!"

While the doctor was attempting to disengage himself, the other continued:

"See here, Bush, if you'll sign a quit claim for any defamatory damages from the company, I can give you a check right now for twenty-five hundred dollars."

Fredrick desisted for the moment in his struggle to escape.

"Make it five thousand," he said, "and I'll go you. You fellows certainly made me more than that much trouble."

Olsen began to groan, and then he saw the determined look in the gray eyes.

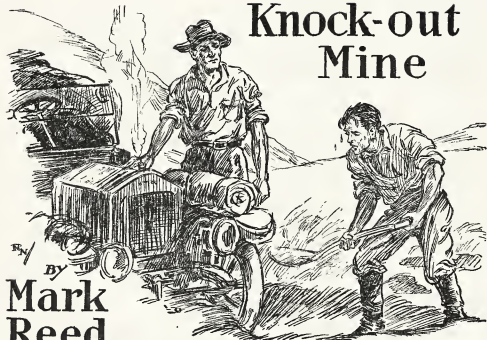
"Oh, all right," he grudgingly acquiesced. "We'll make it five grand!"

PRETTY HOT UP THERE

ASTRONOMERS have now the advantage of instruments delicate enough to measure the heat of a match two thousand miles away. That sounds fishy, but it has been vouched for by reputable experts. There is one catch—to be sure the instrument could make the measurement spoken of *if* no atmosphere intervened between it and the match.

Aside from this, however, the improved instruments have enabled the scientists to make some astonishing measurements of the heat of the heavenly bodies. They have found, on Betelgeuse, surface temperatures around four thousand six hundred degrees Fahrenheit, and on Rigel temperatures around twenty-eight thousand degrees, and that might be called real summer weather.

Knock-out Mine



By
**Mark
Reed**

Author of "Honesty, Inc.," "All Motives Lacking," Etc.

Diogenes carried a lantern by daylight, saying that he was searching for an honest man. Pete Dugan, the middleweight, took a suit case and went out to find an honest manager, but it was a long and adventurous search.

NOW look here, Dugan. It's all right to keep howling for an honest man. But we've got to be reasonable. We ain't anything but human beings to pick from."

Old E. C. Conger was standing at the window of a Broadway hotel. Fourteen stories below him puffed and panted a sweltering city, and as he spoke he tugged savagely at his wilted collar, and tried to keep his patience. It was an unexpected and dubious privilege to be backing a prize fighter, at an age when most men of his wealth were donning white flannels and letting the younger generations carry on the world's work.

Still, it was his own fault. He should never have advanced the money to let his son manage Dugan. But he had. And, probably, but for the pugnacious honesty of that young bullneck sitting there on the bed, the respected name of Conger would right now have been figur-

ing in a nasty scandal. Certainly the Dugan-Kettlety bout had been slated for a frame-up.

Phew! Too hot a day for gratitude. The thing to do was to help Dugan pick some sort of managerial helpmate quickly, then get back to the business of Moline and the cool, white-columned house overlooking the Mississippi.

Dugan stopped rubbing his fists over his bristly head.

"Say, Mr. Conger," he demanded, "our 'ad' ain't queering us, is it?" Picking up a pink sporting sheet from the floor, he gazed at an insertion on the back page, with all an author's pride.

WANTED

Man who has handled champions to manage coming young middleweight. Salary and percentage. Party who gets job must prove he is square. Crooks keep away. Apply afternoons from 2 to 3, Room 1408, Hotel Claridge.

Old E. C. shook his head dubiously.

"I tell you, Dugan, your requirements are a bit stiff. It's almighty hard for a man to prove he is honest."

Dugan's jaw set. Memories of the sleek young manager, who had so suavely bluffed and smiled him into a frame-up, still rankled.

"Well, he's got to prove it," he muttered. "The next guy that manages me hasn't got to be but one thing—and that's on the level."

At this a blond-haired young fellow, who had been sitting on the bureau with his feet on a chair, could stand it no longer. He jumped down, his face red with heat and argumentation.

"Yust a minute, Pete. Our next manager's gotta be more than on the level. He's gotta know fighters, an' how to get gate receipts, an' how to lay out a fight and——"

Dugan eyed his trainer with pleasant disapproval.

"Aw, shut up, Ole!" he said. "That part's easy."

THE glow of a new idea had come into the harassed face of old Conger. He studied the Swedish trainer for a moment, as though he had never seen him before.

"Say, Dugan. Couldn't Ole manage you for a while?"

Dugan let out a yell of derision, and Ole himself was equally decisive.

"No, no, Mister Conger. There bane no oder man understan' Pete's muscles and his stomach like me. Besides, a manager has to yump about all time. I ban't able yump about and train Pete, too."

Old Conger knitted his brow, and wiped away the drops from his lean, hawklike face. This combination of weather and pugilists would be the wreck of him. There came a knock at the door. He straightened up with determination.

"Dugan," he said, "that knock's another applicant. And if he is any good at all, we're goin' to sign him on as your manager, right here and now."

"Yeah?" muttered Dugan, in a rebellious tone.

"Yeah."

"But Mistah Conger, I ban't sure.

This is thirteenth fellah we see this afternoon."

"Can't help that. Now give this fellow a chance, Dugan, and don't tell him he's a crook before he has opened his mouth."

But when the door was opened, their expectancy fell. Applicant No. 13 proved to be a panting messenger boy.

"For E. C. Conger," he announced.

The old manufacturer took the proffered yellow envelope listlessly, but as he read his face brightened.

"Thank Heaven!" he ejaculated.

"Boys, listen to this:

"E. C. CONGER,

Hotel Claridge,

New York City.

"Dan Stringer is man you want. Has A-1 knowledge of the ring. Once held Tom Sharkey himself to ten-round draw. Good mixer. Fair-and-square sporting man as ever drew breath. But has had bad break last few years. Now runs gym somewhere in Bronx."

"FOLGEREY."

"I ain't sure Folgerrey's any too square," said Dugan.

"Bah! If any of you prize-fightin' gentry are square, he is. Went up to see him, but he was in Chicago. So I sent him a telegram. Had forgotten all about it."

As he talked old Conger was ringing for a bell boy, dragging out his suit case, and ramming on his cuffs in an ecstasy of impatience.

"You boys can talk with him. I'm takin' the four o'clock West. Never want to see this damn city again, and don't intend to!"

Ole fumbled with the telephone book.

"No Dan Stringer in here," he stated.

"Well, you'll have to locate him somehow. Make him our offer. If he won't sign for that, add on another thousand. I don't give a damn. Guess we'll get it back."

The departing manufacturer stopped in his preparations long enough to pull out a check book.

"Here's a couple thousand," he said.

"Make it last till your next fight."

It took Dugan and Ole till late in the evening to locate Dan Stringer's gym, for

the reason that it apparently went under the name of the Melrose Club. When they stepped out of the subway, far uptown, the carnival lilt of a carousel and the roar of scenic railways greeted them. And across the night sky they read in enormous incandescent letters the words: "Amusement Park!" For the first time in a week Ole laughed.

"Yust listen to that, Pete!" he cried. "Our new manager hangs out in a live part of town."

Dugan's pace quickened.

Two blocks away they stopped before what had apparently once been a one-story factory, jammed against the rear wall of the amusement park. Across the front a long white sign, bolted into the bricks, bore the legend: "Melrose Club." Dugan grunted with satisfaction. The doors and windows were wide open, and inside he could see two rings, horizontal bars, rowing machines, stationary bicycles. By all tokens, the huge white-washed interior would have been a hive of physical activity, had not the night been so unbearably hot. The gay roar of the adjacent park quickened his blood. After five days' confinement in a downtown hotel it seemed as though he was entering paradise. Paradise, with a guardian angel to look after his pugilistic destinies!

"Boy!" exclaimed Ole excitedly, taking a random crack at a punching bag as they entered. "Won't this be a swell place to work?"

"Go easy, Ole," growled Dugan. "Go easy! I ain't signin' on for no gym privileges till I give this Stringer bird the once-over. Shure, if he has had a run of hard luck, there may be a reason for it."

He stepped up to a group of kneeling athletes who were shooting dice.

"Hey, boys! Where's the main guy?"

A lad in pink tights indicated a half-open door marked "Office." Within could be seen an exhausted man with his feet on his desk, dozing in the breeze of an electric fan. Dugan shouldered his way into the tiny office, with Ole at his heels.

"Am I speakin' to Mr. Stringer?"

The man addressed swung his thick legs down, and wheeling around in his chair, revealed himself to be the owner of a

sullen, pushed-in face, a bald head, and a pair of beautiful cauliflower ears. He eyed Dugan disagreeably through his narrowed lids.

"What the hell you want of Dan Stringer?"

"Not much, I guess," said Dugan, not waiting for an invitation to sit down.

"It bane this way, Mr. Stringer——" began Ole.

"Hey, cut the comedy. I ain't Dan Stringer."

"Yeah?" In Dugan's inflection was tremendous relief.

"My name's Jones. Jess Jones. Take it you didn't know Dan's given up the Melrose Club. Now what can I do for you? Just name it, and I'm at your service."

A shrewd look hovered around Dugan's eyes.

"How long since Stringer left?"

"Oh, 'bout two months."

Dugan bent forward.

"Had to clear out on account of a little dirty work, didn't he?"

THE effect of this question upon Jess Jones was marked. His lips puffed in a faint gasp of surprise; then he shook his head, and put on an air of bland unconcern. But Dugan had spotted that momentary embarrassment.

"Shure, he did. Don't try to bluff me."

The proprietor of the Melrose Club indicated the door with a backward jerk of his thumb.

"You bozos are in the wrong pew," he said. "You better beat it while the going's good."

Dugan jumped to his feet.

"By damn, you come across, or I'll show——"

"Hey, Pete, don't start a yam here."

"Shut up, Ole, and close that door."

A look of alarm flashed over the face of the man in the chair, and he reached for his telephone. Dugan sent it spinning to the floor.

"Come on now! Come across! What did Dan Stringer pull, that he had to clear out? Quick, gimme a testimonial of his character, or I'll put you to sleep for a month."

Jones struggled to his feet.

"Say," he sputtered, "think I'm lettin' a big stiff like you talk back to me! Me, Jess Jones! I've knocked out world champions in my day."

As he spoke, the Melrose Club proprietor shot out a grimy fist. Dugan ducked, and bent back until he was nearly sitting in his chair again; then, as he rose, he put his full weight into an uppercut. The man who had knocked out world champions staggered back and sat down, with a surprised look in his face. Dugan bent over him.

"Come on!" he urged. "Come across with it! What did Dan Stringer pull, that he had to clear out?"

"Aw right, I'll tell yuh—I'll tell yuh. No need to get so rough about it. You see it was this way——"

"What way?"

The mart in the chair was too dazed to tell anything but the truth.

"You see, I bought this building 'bout five years ago. After I licked Tim Herrins. Then last fall Dan comes round. 'Jess,' he says, 'how 'bout fixin' up a gym here?' 'Shure, Dan,' sez I. And we does. This spring business brisks up, and naturally I feels I ought to rate a couple hundred dollars more rent per month. 'I don't see it,' sez he. It made me mad. 'Dan,' sez I, 'if yuh won't give me a square deal, we dissolve partners—and I'll run the joint alone.'"

"Huh! You squeezed him out, did you?"

Stringer's erstwhile partner took on an air of genuine amazement at this remark.

"Say, cut that! Shure I was on the level. Dan wasn't square wid me. Dat's where the trouble lie."

Dugan picked up his hat.

"Come on, Ole," he said. "There's nothin' here for us." Then he turned back. "Where's Dan now?" he demanded.

"Dan? Understand he beat it to his home town, Denver, and's runnin' a hotel. 'Sunset House,' he calls it."

Four days later the Continental Flier was rushing Dugan and Ole across the plains of Nebraska. As the miles diminished between their endless games of pinochle and the Sunset House of Denver,

the pair became in high feather. Stringer was as good as signed up, now. No man in his senses would persist in managing a hotel if he could manage a prize fighter. In a couple of days Dugan saw himself in training again, all the worries and responsibilities that wreck a fighter's nerves shunted onto other shoulders. Ole, at his side, became voluble with rosy plans.

"First, Pete, we better take on 'Rocky Mountain Bearcat' again. He howl like hell for return fight, you remember. Then if Mr. Stringer want to keep on just same with hotel, he can. Maybe we can train right in hotel. We have top floor, shed, or something."

It was after midnight when they pulled into the Denver station. For nearly an hour the impatient Ole had had their bags waiting in the vestibule, and they were the first to leap out upon the platform. The trunk which contained what small amount of paraphernalia they had decided to bring was eventually wrung from the hands of a sleepy baggage man, and they hailed a taxi.

"Sunset House!" said Dugan.

The driver gave his fares a suspicious look, and curtly slammed the door. They drove for what seemed an eternity, and each street into which they turned was narrower and more poorly lighted than its predecessor. Finally the taxi drew up before a shabby, three-story building, crowned by an iron cornice, and looking singularly raw and red in the glare of the single arc before its unlighted entrance.

"Here you are," said the driver.

"Shure?" asked Dugan.

"Ain't a doubt of it."

"Py golly!" ejaculated Ole, as he tripped over a loose tile in the entrance vestibule: "Mr. Stringer ought to yump at the chance to get out of here."

Inside, the solitary occupant of the office sat at the desk, reading a newspaper. In fact, he was so absorbed in it that they were nearly upon him before he looked up. But when he did look up he revealed a frank, open countenance. He was a man in his early forties, with eyes singularly alert and friendly. Dugan breathed easier. Thank Heaven!

There was no oily suavity about this fellow, none of that slick gambler's elegance which had characterized his last manager.

"Guess you're Dan Stringer, the proprietor, ain't you?"

The man behind the desk smiled cordially.

"Yes and no," he said. "I'm the proprietor; but I ain't Stringer. He left about a month ago. I bought him out."

"He ban't gone again?" said Ole weakly.

"No, this is the first time. However, my name's Broklaw, Adelbert Broklaw; and I expect I can fix you up as well as the former management could. In fact, probably better. Want to be shown to your rooms?"

"No!" said Dugan fiercely.

"Pete, you better get some sleep. You just lost three pounds, you know."

At a nod from Ole the proprietor selected a key from the board, and was about to lead his guests upstairs, when he stopped.

"By the way, gentlemen," he said. "If you have any valuables, it might be wise to leave them in the safe."

"Yeah?" said Dugan cautiously.

"Yes. You see, Stringer got in a bad class of trade. 'Bein' what he was, he attracted 'em, I suppose. I haven't got 'em all weeded out yet. So you better be on the safe side." He laughed. "And the safe side is inside the safe."

"Guess, you're right," said Dugan absently, and, unbuttoning his coat, he drew out his wallet and handed it to the proprietor.

"That's the ticket!" said the latter, after locking it in the safe. "Now the management's responsible."

But Dugan's mind was on more pertinent matters.

"Look here!" he said, scowling fiercely at the gentle Broklaw. "You hinted something kind of dark about Stringer. I'm interested in gettin' the low-down on that guy. How about him?"

"You really want to know?"

Dugan and Ole nodded.

"Well, I can tell you he stung me right and proper on this ark here. Misrepresented it from cellar to garret. And if

you want me to put it in plain English, I think he's a low-down swindler. And I ain't the only man in Denver that thinks so either. Ask anybody."

"Yeah?"

"Why, you boys come out to the kitchen, and I'll show you where he ripped out the refrigerator on me and carted it off—after he sold the hotel, mind you!"

Dugan trod upstairs gloomily.

"Good Lord, Ole!" he muttered. "Where are we at anyway? Who's right about this guy, and who isn't? Maybe we're chasing round tryin' to sign on a bigger crook than young Conger was!"

THE clocks were striking three before

Dugan finally fell asleep; accordingly he did not wake until noon. He rubbed his eyes, and stared blankly about the barren, shabby room. Then he saw Ole in the next bed, still lost to the world, and remembered where he was. In Denver! And hot on the trail of an honest man! Jumping out of bed, he began to shadow-box gayly around the room in his pajamas. Suddenly he stopped short. That hotel bird downstairs had said Stringer was a crook. For a moment Dugan glowered darkly at his sleeping trainer, then he hauled him out by the legs.

"Hey, Ole!" he yelled. "Rise and shine! This ain't no Swedish holiday."

They hurried down the two flights of stairs, four steps at a time, the problem of Stringer's moral status temporarily eclipsed by hunger, and entered the dining room which they had noticed the night before at the left of the office. As the room was empty, they had their choice of tables.

"Grapefruit for me!" announced Dugan, "and cereal, and ham and eggs, and wheat cakes, and coffee."

"You ban't havin' wheat cakes," corrected Ole. "They bane fattening."

"Sure, didn't you tell me last night I'd lost three pounds?"

"You ban't havin' wheat cakes."

Dugan looked sullen.

"Hey, where are all the waiters, anyway?" he demanded.

Picking up a knife, he tinkled the vinegar cruets briskly. Ole looked at his watch, much perplexed.

"Twelve thirty. Yust about lunch time."

"Hey, how about a little service?" called Dugan.

They listened. There was no answer. Nor could they detect any rattling of crockery from the direction of the kitchen.

"Funny!" muttered Dugan. Pushing back his chair he tiptoed to the swinging doors which led to the rear. For a moment he held his ear to the crack, and listened. Then Ole saw him disappear down a dark corridor. In a moment he was back, a blank, uncomprehending look on his face.

"This is a helluva joint we got into," he explained. "No cooks, and no fire in the ranges, and nothing in sight but a few raw potatoes and a slab of bacon!"

They rushed into the office.

It was empty. Neither a clerk nor a guest in sight. The unswept floor was littered with paper, and already into the atmosphere of the place was stealing that dank and musty chill which characterizes unopened houses. Muttering expletives as he went, Dugan dashed up to the second floor, while Ole investigated a small parlor and writing room behind the stairs. They met again in the center of the office.

"There bane something wrong, Pete."

"Yeah. Let's take a look outside."

The heavy door was unyielding; but it was held by a spring lock; and by snapping the catch they were able to open it. Outside, they looked forth upon a shabby district of tenements, and beyond, a blue snow-capped range of mountains. There a small hurriedly printed notice, which had been tacked to the jamb of the door, met their gaze.

NOTICE

To Guests and Employees

This Hotel

Closed Till I Open Again..

ADELBERT BROKLAW.

Dugan clapped his hands to the region of his heart, and dashed back into the office. The thick iron door of the safe behind the counter swung open easily, and he groped wildly about between the tiny partitions. Finally he struck several matches and peered back into the farthest

corners to make doubly sure. There was no doubt about it. His wallet was gone. And in it was not only all his proceeds from the Kettlety fight, but also the money he had obtained from cashing old Conger's check. He came slowly out from behind the counter, and kicked their trunk which still stood where it had been left the night before. At any rate, that had not been rifled.

Ole gazed at him with rueful eyes.

"I said it was a mistake to cash Mr. Conger's check in New York."

"You gotta cash checks where you can," said Dugan.

Ole shook his head, unconvinced of Dugan's financial genius. Then the full import of their woes descended upon him.

"Oh, Pete!" he sobbed. "We yust have got to have a manager."

THE officer that Dugan finally succeeded in locating did not seem startled by the fighter's account of the robbery. He strolled leisurely about the hotel office, examining in turn the open safe, the notice which Dugan had torn from the door outside, and the tearful Swede hunched down so distressfully on the trunk.

"It listens plausible," he said. "Broklaw told me only day before yesterday he hadn't been taking in much money lately."

"Hub! That was before last night."

The officer chuckled.

"You're right there. Well, the two of you come along with me to headquarters and tell your story to the cap'n."

"My trainer here is staying with the baggage."

"You better bring that along, too."

Dugan shook his head obstinately.

"No. We're goin' to stick on at this hotel. Ain't we paid 'em four thousand dollars in advance?"

Thus it was settled. When Dugan returned from headquarters late that afternoon, and hammered for admittance, a much recuperated Ole, with a long white apron hanging from his neck, let him in. A faint but delicious odor of bacon was wafted out from the gloomy recesses behind him.

"You ban't found Broklaw?"

"Not a sign of him, or Stringer either. We're stranded for fair."

Ole took the dejected fighter by the arm.

"Come into the dining room," he urged. "I rustle a little grub while you bane gone."

The bacon was crisped to a turn, the hash-brown potatoes were unimpeachable, and the coffee was excellent; but despite their hunger, it proved a gloomy meal. When he had finished, Dugan scraped back his chair and emptied the contents of his pocket on the table.

"Seven dollars and forty-two cents. How much you got?"

Ole lifted up his white apron and fished through his pockets.

"Four dollar and a quarter."

"Huh! Eleven bucks between us."

"I bane tankin'. Could we wire Mr. Conger for yust a little bit more?"

Dugan debated.

"Damned if I will!" he said. "I ain't admittin' I lost all that money. He thinks I'm dumb enough, as it is."

Ole nodded.

"I feel same way, too."

Dugan gritted his teeth, and clenched his fists till the knuckles went white.

"Yah! If I had that Broklaw bird here, I'd take him on for a knock-out. That's what I'd do. The dirty crook!"

Ole shook his head sorrowfully.

"When I tank what nice, honest-sounding fellah he was!"

"Honest sounding!" Dugan jumped to his feet. "Say, know what this means?"

"What?"

"We were taking that bird's dope on Stringer serious. Huh! A guy that would clean us out of four thousand bucks can't be trusted. He wouldn't know an honest man if he saw one. We keep right on huntin' for Stringer, see?" Then Dugan's enthusiasm waned. "Yeah, but it's goin' to be hard huntin' him if we ain't got any money——"

"We bane in a yam, Pete."

To relieve his feeling, Ole got up and began to clear the table, while Dugan strolled glumly out into the office, and, lighting a cigarette, picked up a newspaper from the desk. Selecting the only comfortable chair in sight, he sat down,

stretched his legs, and tried to feel he was a prosperous and contented guest. But reading was difficult. His mind rangled with thoughts of his lost capital. He turned to the sporting page. All baseball! Not so much as mention of the manly art that he practiced. He was about to throw the paper aside, when a headline caught his eye. A cowboy, digging a grave in which to bury a favorite horse, had struck gold.

"Yah!" he exclaimed in disgust. "Some people have all the luck."

But his disgust did not prevent him from continuing to read the account; and when Ole returned from the kitchen, his white apron removed and his yellow hair slicked down smoothly, he found the coming young middleweight of the world pacing the floor, bristling with suppressed action.

"Hey, Ole! There's a gold rush on!"

AND then, as the Swede looked blank, he related what he proposed. They would motor down to this scene of wealth overnight, make a quick clean-up, or at least enough to replace Broklaw's embezzlement, then return, and go on with their original plan of signing up Stringer and fighting the Bearcat. It was only a few days' digression, and it would save their lives. Dugan steamed up to the idea as he would to a fight. Circling around Ole, he emitted a torrent of ejaculations and explanations. But the latter was obdurate against it.

"Pete," he said, "you bane crazy. Nobody finds gold nowadays yust lyin' around loose."

Dugan frantically waved the paper which he had found on Broklaw's desk.

"But it says so right in the paper. Here's a man sold his claim for ten thousand. And another for twenty-five."

"Yust the same——"

"We ain't time to argue. It's only a small rush. We gotta hurry. The paper says it's only been on two days. We're startin' to-night—and get in on the ground floor."

"But we ban't got any money."

"Shure we have. We'll hock our junk."

Ten minutes later they were entering a pawnshop. Dugan dropped the trunk

from his shoulder with a crash, and by the time the startled proprietor could issue forth, the floor was covered with a motley collection of punching bags, gloves, weights and gayly colored pants. From the two suit cases came suits of clothes, sweaters, toilet articles. Two gorgeous, purple dressing gowns crowned the exhibition.

"Hey!" said Dugan. "How much am I offered?"

The eyes of the wily broker glittered.

"Ninety dollars."

"Three hundred!"

"I might give a hundred."

"I gotta have three. Come on. I'll add our turnips!" And with a quick movement Dugan removed his watch and Ole's, and threw them on the pile.

"A hundred and twenty."

"Hey, you'll have to hit harder 'n that. Three hundred!"

"Those glove knock out the Bearcat at the Armory last May."

"A hundred twenty-five."

And so it went. When the clamor had finally subsided, Dugan held in his hand two hundred and fifty dollars and a sheaf of pawn tickets. But his victory had not been without cost. He had exchanged the very clothes they stood in for overalls, heavy denim shirts, and hobnail shoes. In addition he had acquired two shovels, a pick, a miner's mortar, pestle and spoon, derelicted on the broker's shelves after some rush of bygone days. The final triumph was a big six-chambered revolver. Dugan strapped it to Ole's waist.

"You wear the artillery. I can use my fists," he explained. "And now, come on. All we need besides this is a tin lizzie."

By noon of the next day the Sunset House, with its distressing memories, was a hundred and fifty miles behind them. So far the road had been easy. True, they had suffered one blow-out, and Dugan, to save money, had wound the rim of the wheel with old rope. But at a lonesome railroad station called Antelope, following directions, they left the main road and found themselves on what was little more than a cattle trail. However, plenty of fresh ruts were discernible in the sand, and Dugan drove ahead unwaveringly.

Up to this point they had seen no fellow prospectors, but soon a big limousine, in sore need of paint and packed to the running boards with supplies and mining tools, came up behind, honking madly for a right to pass. Dugan drew out, and as the big car rocked past, a lanky man in the rear seat stood up.

"You boys might as well turn around!" he yelled. "All the gold'll be dug 'fore you c'n get there."

Dugan could find no reply, but his foot pressed down hard on the accelerator. Ole shook his fist at the departing josh. They breathed hard. The fever of the gold rush had begun to burn in their veins. Just over that long range of blue mountains in the distance was the yellow metal that would set them on their feet again.

THE wide valley began to narrow, sagebrush became sparse, the sand strewn with rocks, and the blue mountains which had seemed so far away began to close in on them and to take on brilliant hues of orange and ocher. Then the automobile ruts converged into a single pair, and they entered into a broken system of arroyos and canyons. The trail mounted steadily. They lost another tire, and had to stop to wind the shoeless rim with a substitute of rope and canvas. As they worked, the heat was reflected back upon them from the narrow walls of the canyon, for the air was no longer stirred by the valley breeze. Ole pushed back his mop of yellow hair, matted with perspiration and dust.

"Hot country, Pete!"

"Yeah. I'd like to step under a shower bath for about five minutes."

They nosed the car around an enormous jut of crumbling sandstone, and beheld a long ascent ahead. Coming down it was a train of mules, and behind each mule lumbered and rattled a single pair of wheels with a barrel lashed to it.

"Suppose that's gold?" whispered Ole hoarsely.

"Shure. Gold or gold ore."

At the rear of the train was a solitary man on horseback.

"How far to the diggin's?" demanded Dugan.

The commander of the mule train reined in his horse, and leisurely eyed Dugan's vehicle from its rope tires to the steaming radiator. He grinned from ear to ear.

"Waal," he finally said, "it's quite a piece up the road yet. Reckon I wouldn't strain that car of yours into makin' it to-night."

Ole looked shrewdly at the passing line of barrels.

"You ban't struck gold already?"

The man on horseback winked in pleased fashion.

"I kinder reckon I have. And a hanged sight richer than most of the boys. You see, there ain't any water within twenty-five miles of the camp. And it's fetchin' me 'bout five dollars a gallon. Expect you boys loaded up with plenty afore you left the crick."

Dugan scowled.

"Yeah, we got some."

His mind was on the twenty-five dollars cash that had remained to them as a common fund after the car, food and supply of gasoline had been paid for. Five gallons of water would not last long in one of these furnacelike gulches.

"Pete, we better turn back and load up."

"We ain't time."

"Tell you what I'll do," said the water merchant. "I allus carries out a quarter barrel or so for the mules. But we're most way out. I got ten gallons or so left I can let you have at a bargain."

"Yeah?" quizzed Dugan. "What do you call a bargain?"

"Oh, say half price. Twenty-five dollars."

"Two-fifty a gallon? Sixty cents a quart—for water? That's a helluva bargain."

"Cost you five dollars up at the diggin's—if you can buy it at all."

Ole looked up at the depths of blue sky above framed by the rims of the canyon.

"Pete," he said. "Looks like it bane goin' to rain to-morrow."

The stranger laughed.

"Billy," he said, "it ain't rained here since last Christmas, and I doubt if it rains again 'fore next."

Ole wet his parched lips with his tongue.

"I tank maybe we better buy some, Pete."

"I got a couple five-gallon cans hitched under that rear barrel. I'll throw them in, too," said the water merchant, eager to facilitate a sale.

When the transaction was completed, and the purveyor of liquid gold had put spur to his horse and galloped after his mule train, Dugan twisted around and studied the collection of sacks and boxes in the tonneau behind him.

"Ten gallons of water, Ole," he muttered, "two weeks' supply of grub, and about three cents to our name. "We gotta strike gold quick."

THEIR idea had been to reach, before dark, the camp which had sprung up around the grave of the cowboy's horse, but the trail became steadily worse. It skirted the talus worn down from the cliffs, and at times the canyon was so narrow that the car literally had to plow and crawl its way over the heaps of disintegrating fragments. They began to come upon heaps of supplies, abandoned by previous drivers to lighten their loads. At one of these Dugan salvaged some rope for his forward wheels, and a little later he had to stop and use it. The canyon was already filling with shadows.

"I tank we better stop for the night."

"How many days you think we got, anyway? We gotta start prospectin' first thing in the morning."

At length the stars began to appear in the thin band of sky over their heads. The trail was now as dark as a pocket; but with the aid of his headlights Dugan gained some idea of the pitfalls ahead, and dodged them as best he could. Once the rear wheel wedged in a crevice between two rocks. For hours they toiled over it. Finally Dugan extemporized the shovel and pick handles as levers, and exerting his entire strength, pried it out. As they grunted and struggled, their nerves became raw from hunger and lack of sleep. Sometimes they took it out on each other, sometimes on the car, sometimes on the absconding Broklaw.

When it seemed as though dawn must

be about ready to break, they experienced a sudden sense of having reached a crest, a sort of top of the world, and the yellow lights flooding ahead revealed a gentle decline, a diverging sandy stretch, full of wandering ruts, as though each car had set off on an exploration of its own. Dugan bore down on the accelerator, and they went a mile in high. Then, suddenly, they felt a slight sinking sensation. The rear wheels whirled in loose sand, the engine stalled, and they came to a stop with an abruptness that threw them against the wind shield.

Ole turned off the lights, and for a moment they sat there, engulfed in total darkness. Then, gradually, they could make out the bulky, black outline of a mountain to the left, and far ahead—a group of twinkling lights.

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Dugan. "There's the camp, at last."

"If it ban't stars——"

"Stars? What's the matter with you? There's the stars up there."

As he spoke Dugan ground his heel down upon the starter. But the engine did not answer. He tried again and again. Not even a sputter.

"Aw, let the old boat rest a bit," he said. "We can make the rest of the distance in the morning. You rustle some wood, and I'll unpack the bacon and some of that five-dollar water—and we'll eat."

Ole began to scout for fuel over the long path of light thrown out by the headlights, bringing in the wood as he found it; and soon Dugan had a tiny fire burning in front of the car.

"You gotta cook fast," said the Swede. "Wood bane pretty scarce. I found few old boards, and that's about all."

They ate two meals in one, then rolled up in blankets, and stretched out on the warm sand. In two moments, before the coyotes in the distance had barked a dozen barks, they were asleep. When they awoke the sun was an hour high in the heavens. Dugan jumped up, feeling stiff and cold, and mechanically began his matutinal shadow boxing. But the sand was too deep under his feet. He desisted and gazed about. They were at the upper end of a long, rock-strewn valley. On

either side and behind them piled up high ranges of purple mountains. Straining his eyes, he made out a mile or so ahead what seemed to be a collection of snow-white patches, from which several thin columns of smoke were rising. The camp and center of mining activities, without doubt. He sprang into the car, followed by Ole.

BUT ten minutes' experimenting proved to them that their rope-shod bus had done its last mile. While Dugan tinkered vaguely under the hood, Ole reconnoitered ahead. In a few minutes he was back, his blue eyes bright with an idea.

"Pete, I tank if we shove her 'bout hundred yards, and then run her down the slope, maybe she start."

Dugan looked at the wheels, which during the night had sunk in the sand almost to the hubs.

"I've pushed that damn bus my last inch," he stated. "You start breakfast and guard the water. I'll hotfoot it over to the camp and get some dope."

He came back in high spirits.

"We're sticking right here, Ole," he explained. "I got a hunch. They say the stuff's wherever you find it. You have to dig down till you come to rock." He extended his palm in which lay a small piece of rotting quartz. "See, this is a sample of the stuff it's in. You have to crush it. We bought the right kind of gadgets—that mortar and pestle thing. Come on, now; let's get busy. We gotta dig seven or eight holes a day."

Ole moved his aching limbs gently.

"Py golly, I hope we hit gold first hole."

There was considerable argument as to where they should start. About one hundred feet from the car was a big clump of manzanita bushes, and Dugan was for commencing operations under its meager but tempting shade. Ole, on the contrary, became convinced that a vein of gold-bearing quartz lay about fifty feet to the west, where he had picked up a hatful of yellowish pebbles. They disputed like two land salesmen, until Ole, reaching down for a shovel, touched the sand. It was already hot as an oven. Then and then only did he concede the merits of Dugan's manzanita site.

They dug furiously for an hour. The sun, rolling high in the heavens, began to burn through the thin screen of leaves above them, and to add to their discomfort a fine powdery dust, dry and alkaline, was raised by their shovels. It sifted through their clothes. Their lips became parched, and their eyes smarted. Straightening up, they mopped their faces.

"Pete," said Ole, "this bane terrible for your physical condition."

"Yeah, think so?"

Ole put his hand over his eyes to shield them from the glare of light, and peered out of the hole. A mile away in the mountains he could see blue shadows that suggested cool glens; but in the great basin on which they were working there was not visible as much shade as an umbrella might afford. Only endless waves of shimmering heat. Then he turned and saw the car, hub deep in the sand.

"I have idea," he exclaimed. "Why not rip top off the car and set it over us?"

Under this protection they renewed their dogged toil. The only distractions were the occasional newcomers, who debouched from out the distant canyon and hurried past, roweled and spurred by thought of gold. They traveled in every conceivable manner—some in trucks, some on horseback, now by limousine, now in mule-drawn wagons. One hardy soul plodded across the sandy plain, about fifty yards from where Dugan and Ole were digging, with his pick and shovel strapped to his back. The two men under the automobile top received in stony silence the flood of questions and witticisms hurled at them. They were too dulled by heat and labor to respond. About nightfall the water merchant with his train of mules passed by, and recognized his customers of the previous afternoon.

"Hey, boys!" he called. "You won't find no 'color' this side the valley."

This remark worried them, and each night they took turns plodding wearily down the valley in search of any additional tips that might instruct them in the art of gold digging. But the consensus of opinion still seemed to be that the metal

was where you found it. One night Ole woke to hear Dugan stumbling into camp, grumbling and growling to himself.

"What happen?" he asked, sitting up anxiously.

"Had a fight."

"Fight?" The sleepy Swede tried to collect his wits. "How big purse?" he queried.

"Purse, hell!" I fought for nothin'. Took on three of 'em. Includin' that bird that sold us the water. Water has never been sellin' for more 'n a dollar a gallon since the rush started."

A fourth day passed, then a fifth; and lack of water began to be an even greater problem than the lack of gold. They reduced their allowance to a quart a day. But it required from two to three quarts to spoon a sample from each new vein of quartz they located. In desperation, Dugan decided to sell the car. Several customers showed up, but as none of them were able to start the stranded vehicle, somehow the deals fell through.

TO tell the truth, the car was acting funny. Each day it had been sinking deeper and deeper into the sand, until now it was resting on the grease pans. One morning, as they eyed it sourly, the happy thought occurred to the thirsty Ole that at least they could salvage the water in the radiator. The process netted close to five quarts of foul and rusty liquid. However, it would do for spooning, which meant that so much more of their main supply was available for drinking purposes.

The two men were telling under the strain. Dugan's big jaw became set tighter and tighter; and in his eyes blazed a sullen wrath, as though he was within the ring.

"We gotta strike somethin' to-day, Ole," he would mutter. "By damn, we gotta! We gotta get in a wallop quick, or we'll be takin' the count!"

Ole watched anxiously. It was tragedy to his expert eye to see Dugan wearing himself down.

"What a yam we're in!" he muttered. "What a yam! We yust have got to find a manager."

"Well, we got to find gold first."

The morning of the seventh day found them down to the last gallon of water, and not so much as a pinhead of yellow metal had they discovered. Dugan measured the precious liquid carefully, then hastily cocked it up before the heat could evaporate it.

"One more round, Ole!" he said. "We'll sink another hole to-day. We can do it on two quarts of water. That'll leave us a couple quarts to drink while we hoof it to the railroad. Then we'll ride the rods back to Denver."

They looked about, debating where the last hole should be dug. On all sides were evidences of their previous efforts. A dozen excavations stretched along a ridge of sand to the east. There was their original exploration under the clump of manzanita. There were the heaps of sand which had proved Ole's hunch of the yellowish pebbles a bad one. A score of holes to the west. Four more to the north. In fact, the immediate terrain looked for all the world as though a settlement of gigantic prairie dogs had sought to put up a town overnight.

"Looks as though we had dug about everywhere."

Dugan glowered at the car sunk deep in the sand. His anger rose, and a fury of resentment against that assemblage of tin and steel, which had refused to run long enough even to be sold, mounted in his heart.

"I tell you where I'm goin' to dig. I'm goin' to dig right in front of that damn car. And when the hole is big enough, I'm goin' to push the damn thing in and bury it!"

By noon they had struck rock. Seizing a pick Dugan chipped off a few fragments. Ole looked at them dully. He had seen too many specimens of quartz already to want to waste any more water on them.

"Aw, come on, Pete," he said. "I ban't goin' to spoon it. If you want to bury the car, let's do it, and clear out."

Dugan seized him by the arm.

"Hey, you, come back here. We're sticking to the finish." He threw some quartz into the mortar. "Now, get busy! Pound that!"

As they worked, two men on horseback rode up from the direction of the camp.

One, a large, middle-aged man, with a heavy beard, remained in his saddle; but the other, a small, dark-faced chap, with a revolver in his belt and wearing a torn straw hat, dismounted and, coming up to Dugan, stood looking down over his shoulder.

"Hunting for anything, Buddy?" he asked jocosely.

"Yeah, two things," said Dugan curtly. "Gold and an honest man."

The newcomer watched with mild curiosity, as Dugan awkwardly shook the contents of the spoon and then endeavored to ease the heavier particles of quartz over the edge. Suddenly he bent forward.

"Hey, let me do that for you."

Before Dugan could protest, the other man had seized the spoon, and was gently rocking it back and forth with a slight circular motion. Then he brought it close to his face, and squinted hard.

"I'll be hanged!" he ejaculated. "Greenhorn's luck! Looka there!"

In the bottom of the spoon at the end of an extremely dirty nail, Dugan and Ole made out what appeared to be a thin streak of yellow butter.

"That's gold, boys!"

"Yeah?" asked Dugan dubiously.

But the man in the straw hat was too excited to answer. He rushed with his discovery to the man on horseback, who bent forward, shading his eyes, and peered into the spoon. "Gold, as sure as preachin'!" Dugan and Ole heard him say.

Then, slowly, the fact penetrated. They had struck gold. The four thousand dollars Broklaw had skipped with could be replaced. They could renew their hunt for Dan Stringer. Riding the rods to Denver was off. They could even buy water, barrels of it! With a yell, Dugan grabbed his shovel and began dealing the mud guards of the car fierce blows of joy. At each swing a four-inch dent appeared.

"You dog-gone old bunch of junk!" he yelled. "You cheap little hard-hittin' pile of tin! I thought you framed us, and by damn, you wise little flyweight—you stopped with a gold mine not six feet in front of you!"

Ole honked madly on the horn.

"Didn't I tell you, Pete? A knock-out! We bane great fighters. What we call it? Knock-out Mine! How about you?"

"Shure. Knock-out Mine!"

THE two strangers, meanwhile, were wasting no time on celebration. The dark-faced man had jumped down into the hole, where he was scratching around furiously with a shovel.

"How does she run, Bill?"

"About on a line with the car. No, a little to the left. Two feet wide! And looks continuous, too!"

"Let's stake our claims to the west!"

Then they became aware of Dugan and Ole celebrating with horn and shovel. A glint of murder came into the eyes of the dark-faced man in the straw hat. Involuntarily, his right hand dropped to his belt, but before he could draw his gun, his companion stepped up to Dugan.

"Look here!" he said. "You two better get busy and stake out your claims. Soon as news of this strike gets to camp, this vicinity will be black with prospectors."

"Shure. Ain't we entitled to all there is?"

"Not on your life, you're not! Miner's law goes here. Thirty feet constitutes a claim, an' double to the original discoverers. That gives you two gentlemen a hundred and twenty feet."

The speaker's statements were so quietly authoritative that it did not occur to Dugan to doubt them. Mechanically, he paced off his allotment in the general direction of the vein, and set up a shovel as the farthest boundary. The two strangers quickly paced off claims beyond. This task done, the bearded man jumped on his horse and galloped furiously off in the direction of the camp, leaving his companion on guard.

"Yust tank!" said Ole, tears of joy in his eyes. "We bane already to pull out broke, and now we bane rich! Millionaires! Pete, you ban't obliged to fight any more."

"Huh! I ain't quittin' the ring just because I own a gold mine!"

Going to the car he poured out two

cups of water from the can, with the air of a man for whom water at five dollars a gallon is no luxury at all. He raised his cup.

"Hey, Ole! To Knock-out Mine!"

"Skoal!" said Ole.

They were drinking greedily, when a shout arose.

"What the hell you guys doin' here?"

They turned. A large truck heavily loaded with equipment had drawn up at a distance, and three men with drawn revolvers were leaping down from it.

"You two buzzards get out of heah, or we'll plug you full of lead."

"Yeah?" said Dugan.

"But we yust discovered gold," explained Ole blithely, as though this put a totally different complexion on the matter.

At this point one of the three, who had apparently been running aimlessly about, returned.

"Boys!" he exclaimed hotly. "The skunks have pulled up all our stakes and put in stakes of their own!"

"Go on!" said Dugan. "This place wasn't occupied when we struck it——"

The air became vitriolic. All talked at once. Ole found himself sitting weakly on the running board, a gun pressed into his shoulder. Before a second man could raise his revolver, Dugan had struck it from his hand. They were at the point of blows when the man in the straw hat rode up hurriedly from where he had been admiring his newly staked-out claim.

"What's the row?"

The spokesman of the truck party stepped forward.

"I'll tell you darn quick," he said. "Me and my pards struck gold here last week Thursday. We staked our claims, and then hustled up to Denver for some machinery. And while we were gone, you horse thieves jumped our claims."

The man in the straw hat laughed boisterously.

"Too darn thin!" You don't get away with that. You happen in here, find us celebratin' a strike, and think you can up an' steal it from us."

"Steal nothin'. We located here first."

The other twisted in his saddle and looked around.

"I see lots of signs of it," he remarked sarcastically.

"But the new claimants were obstinate.

"We dug down about ten feet, struck color, then filled in again. Must have been 'bout where that heah car is standing."

DUGAN and Ole exchanged a troubled look. If their refractory bus had stalled over a new-filled hole, no wonder it had sunk in up to the grease pans. But the owner of the fourth claim was full of fight.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I don't believe a damn word you say. But I don't want no unnecessary shootin', 'cause when I shoots, I shoots to kill. The sheriff was here a few minutes ago, and he is due back inside an hour. What say we kind of let him judicate matters?"

The three claimants to the Knock-out Mine withdrew for consultation. Dugan saw them scurrying about, looking for further evidences of their ownership. Suddenly one of them yelled excitedly to a companion.

"Here's a hole still left where they pulled up one of our stakes. Hey, boys, let's guard this! This is Exhibit A for the sheriff."

Dugan beckoned Ole to his side.

"You remember the first night we got here?" he began.

Ole nodded sheepishly.

"Yeah. Huh! Well, you pulled up those guys' stakes to make coffee by, didn't you?"

"I—I ban't sure."

Dugan did not deign to answer, but strode rapidly across the sand heaps to where the owner of the fourth claim sat fanning himself with his straw hat.

"We made a mistake," he said tersely. "The Swede with me pulled up their stakes the night we landed here. And our bus is right over their mine. That's why it settled down so. I'm goin' to hand the property over—"

"Whoa, there! Hold on! Don't let a little detail like that fret you. My pard's sheriff, you know. He'll be back with our outfit d'rectly." The dark-faced man winked shrewdly. "An' when he comes, I kinda reckon he'll see justice done. There

may be a shot or two dealt around, but when it's all over the claims'll be ourn."

"Yeah? I'm goin' over and tell 'em about these stakes."

The man on horseback reached for his Colt.

"You c'n start, son," he said, "but you won't get all the way."

Dugan eyed the black muzzle for a moment, then he slowly retraced his steps to Ole, and sat down beside him on the running board.

"Ole," he whispered, "where's our gun?"

"I tank I put it in with the bacon."

"Fish it out. But don't let that guy on horseback see you."

Surreptitiously, the Swede located the missing weapon.

"You kape it," said Dugan. "I'll use me fists. Now, listen; here's what we're goin' to do. If the sheriff sides with his side kick there, as he probably will, we're goin' to streak it over to those three guys, and tell 'em the darn mine is theirs. Then we're goin' to beat it, an' let 'em scrap for it among themselves. See?"

Ole nodded.

They waited grimly. For nearly an hour there was not a shift in the arrangement of the belligerents. Death was in the air. It was only a case of setting off the first spark, and, as if in preparation for the dire event, four buzzards appeared out of the empty sky and began to circle patiently above the mine. The sheriff's pal sat in his saddle, Colt in hand, his gaze never leaving the two figures by the sunken car. At the precious stake hole, "Exhibit A," two of the newcomers stood guard. The third had returned to the truck, where he sat with his rifle across his knees, staring over the sandy basin at the line of blue mountains beyond. Then a cloud of dust rose in the direction of the tent camp. It grew larger, and soon the sheriff galloped up. Behind them, strapped to his saddle, were a bag of supplies, a canvas tent, and pick and shovel. He reined in beside the horse-man guarding the fourth claim.

"Get set for the gong, Ole!" said Dugan; and they stood up, nerves tense, ready for action. To his belt Dugan had fastened a canteen containing the last

two quarts of water. They watched. Apparently the dark-faced man was telling the sheriff the complete state of affairs. Then, finally, the two horsemen wheeled and headed for the stranded car.

"If they start shootin', shoot back, Ole. They're crooks!"

THE two horsemen came up slowly, and as he came, the sheriff took a good look at the pair guarding the stake hole, at the car sunk in the sand, and at the hole in front of it which contained a fortune.

"Well," said he to Dugan, "what's this yarn about you two gentlemen jumpin' these claims?"

Dugan started his story.

"It's a damn lie," interrupted the dark-faced man beside the sheriff. "These fellers are yellin'—afraid the boys who came in on the truck will shoot 'em."

"Yeah?" Dugan's interrogative was contemptuous.

The sheriff eyed him sharply from head to foot, then, raising in his stirrups, he cupped his hands and yelled to the men guarding the stake hole.

"All right, out there! Put up your guns. These claims are all yours, I reckon. Little error on our part."

Dugan gasped. This level-eyed, sharp-talking stranger had handed over the usurped claim, as spontaneously as he breathed. No doubt about it. The sheriff was honest.

But it had been a bitter pill for his companion. The dark-faced man positively reeled in the saddle at thought of the wealth that had gone out of his clutches.

"By gum, Dan!" he said disgustedly.

"You're as big a darn idiot as ever I want to meet."

Dugan's eyes lighted with a sudden hunch.

"Dan!" he exclaimed. "Say, Mr. Sheriff, what's yuh *last* name?"

"Stringer——"

Dugan reached up a calloused fist.

"Glad to meet you," he said. "My name's Dugan. Pete Dugan, the middle-weight. I been chasin' all over hell's kitchen after you. I'm in bad need of a manager."

At this point he paused, and rubbed his fist excitedly over his bristling sun-burned head.

"Guess I better come across clean right now. I'm flat broke—except for two quarts of water."

"Oh, that's all right," said Stringer easily. "I've got plenty. A funny thing happened. I sold a hotel up in Denver. Feller couldn't pay me but two hundred down. However, I let him have it. Then last night I happened on him at a joint over in camp, gambling away money like sand—and I made him cough up to the tune of four thousand——"

Dugan grinned.

"Yeah?" he said. "Then that's squared."

Stringer looked about the scene of Dugan's recent gold strike.

"Had enough prospectin'?" he asked. "We might locate for a few days at the end of this vein and see what we can strike. How about you?"

Dugan eyed the man in the saddle with satisfaction.

"No," he said. "Let's beat it back to Denver. I got all the gold I'm lookin' for."



KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH AIRPLANES

WHEN Commander Richard E. Byrd and his crew were nearing Great Britain in the *America*, they received a message over the air from the weather bureau in England, advising them to cut south of their intended route and thus avoid a stormy region. They replied that they would, and the circumstance gives rise to an interesting development in aviation. It is proposed that air ports in the future send out weather signals continually for the guidance of pilots, and signals, also, of position, so that aviators may be doubly sure of the location of land fields. Experiments along this line have already been made by Imperial Airways, in England.

By
J.H. Greene



In Poison Valley

By the author of "Thirst," "Winning a Windjammer," Etc.

When one fellow goes ahead in life, and his chum stays behind, and they meet, later on, to face as bitter a problem as that which Roddy and Buck faced, there's bound to be a pretty tough test of the strength of friendship.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN SALLY SMILED.

RODERICK CRAWFORD carried a bag of flour out of the store and hoisted it into his flivver; Sally, his wife, ticked off the bag from her housekeeping list, and then reminded him of their next necessity. The car was piled with their purchases. After driving to most of the orchards in the valley, where Roddy discussed pests, prices and politics with his neighbors, they were now ending the day with marketing.

"Afraid we can't go that new tire for Billy's bicycle," said Roddy softly.

"Bevins expected more off his account. Billy will hev to wait till we ship our crop—if we hev a crop."

Sally started to plead; the tire was on the list, for it was a necessity for Billy. She was about to say she would forgo her new shoes, when Roddy's savagely glinting glance, along the wide grass-grown street that led to the ranges, silenced her. She knew the gaunt plainsman was most determined when soft in his speech; she remembered that he, too, had promised Billy that tire.

That thick smoke in the hills, not the clean, gray cloud of a forest fire, but the dirty, dark smoke from Morven's smel-

ters, was causing Roddy's blue eyes to blaze like spitting gun barrels. Those smelters, cold for a year, had started again; their arsenious, asphyxiating fumes would again hurt his fruit trees; Roddy would again be fighting with "Buck" Morven. All that afternoon he had been stiffening up the opposition of the fruit growers to the mine; listening to other wives in the homesteads, she had heard her husband haranguing with that fervor which had fastened on him the nickname of "Rowdy."

Roddy returned to the store, while Sally wondered what that smoke would bring to them besides blighting their orchard. She was naturally optimistic, and always tried to see through her troubles to some silver cloud of a solution. The fight between the mine owner and the orchardists had become more than a conflict of natural resources; it was now a bitter personal issue between the two men, harking back to when they had been cowmen together and she had separated them. They had sold their ranch when she had married Roddy, who took up fruit growing, while Buck Morven went into mining. He had become a magnate and was heading for the Senate, while Roddy owned a poor orchard and was in debt.

FRUIT growing was a battle with pests and scale one year, other things the next, involving elaborate spraying outfits and labor to work them. Roddy faced another handicap; his orchard was higher up in the valley and more liable to frosts than his neighbors', lower down; he had to keep smudges burning during cold snaps; and now next year promised to be a locust year. Then, on top of this, Morven had found a new lode in the old Colpitt Mine, and had decided to smelt at the mine, instead of carrying his ore to the seaboard. Peaceful Valley faced the prospect of becoming as desolate and barren as the mountains of Butte and Anaconda. The first few months of smelting had already withered the grass around the mine; even the near-by firs and pines began to look scraggy, and the valley's water supply had been tainted.

Sally reviewed the whole conflict: the fruit growers' first victory, the injunction

against Morven, Morven's lifting of the injunction, and further contests in the appellate courts. Morven had temporarily closed the mine when he had been recalled East, through labor troubles in some of his other properties and a temporary pinching in Wall Street. For a time it had been reported that Buck was ruined.

Sally, a cow-country woman, whose mother had been born in a prairie schooner, was able to gaze placidly at the wide, climbing street of Independence, at the baby foothills nestling close up to the towering peaks beyond, at that ominous smoke outlining unknown valleys and ridges in that apparently flat-green curtain of pines and firs. She could regard the whole procession of events as somewhat funny.

Those peaks had dowered her with their aloof serenity. If Roddy had only accepted that block of stock Buck had offered him, if Roddy had not started out, a Paul Revere among the orchardists, to organize them to fight, if Roddy had not been so proud, so defiantly independent, so rooted in his acres, so doggedly insistent that the fruit growers had a prior right—matters might have been different. She knew that Buck, too, would fight to a finish; she liked Buck; she recalled how much of a chance it was, apparently, that she had chosen one rather than the other. But she had married Roddy, and she had borne him two children. They had got along somehow and had been happy. She had no regrets and would not exchange Peaceful Valley for all of London and Paris, which the Eastern woman Buck had married could command. All that Sally Crawford could do was to try and smile through, keep her head, and do what she could to rein in that hot-head, her husband, Roderick.

Roddy was returning with a side of bacon when a luxurious, gray roadster raced past, as if Fresno Street, Independence, was the open highway on the prairies. Children, chickens and dogs scattered to its horn and sighing cylinders; big Bob Bailey, the sheriff, appeared on his doorstep, but took no note of the car's number when he recognized the man beside the chauffeur. Roddy dropped

his bacon in the dust, and his hand slid involuntarily to his belt.

"Now, Roddy," admonished Sally, smiling.

"All right, gel," said Roddy, picking up the bacon and flushing a little.

Sally could always make him stop bucking, with her smile; she never let him forget she was still the girl for whom he and Buck used to get out their best silver-studded saddles, to call on at her father's ranch. That ranch, miles away in another State, was now in the hands of a trust manager; the open ranges were now wire-fenced cattle pens; her father had passed on to the big mustering. But Sally could still ride, though they had been compelled to sell their saddle horses; the perennial youthfulness of the ranges was in her smile. Roddy flushed like a little boy caught playing hooky.

"My hand just naturally feels for a trigger when I see that catamount," he drawled. "I kinder forget them days is past."

BEVINS, very fat from storekeeping in a climate that made a house a prison, appeared. He, too, recognized the owner of the car, and smiled largely.

"Going up to his mine. They say he's found a new lode in the lower levels. It's five years since Buck Morven has been in Peaceful Valley."

"'Poison Valley,' you mean," corrected Roddy. "Poison Valley, since he came with his smoke and his slag heaps."

"They say he's going to get us a railroad," continued Bevins, blinking at the golden haze of the disappearing car's dust.

"If he does," barked Roddy, "the depot won't be here, you can bet! He'll hev the town where his smokestacks are. You'll all hev to pull up stakes and skip to his whistle."

"Well, he has the brains, and we ain't."

"Brains!" sneered Roddy. "He's puffy under the eyes and got a dewlap. Bet yer he has to carry life insurance 'fore he can sleep nights. What do the papers say he's worth—five million, ain't it? I wouldn't give a nickel a pound for him on the hoof. Racin' through, as if this town was a shack on the highway and us

just stumps. Why didn't you take his number, Bob?"

"Didn't see it," replied the sheriff shortly. "I was looking at his chauffeur; seems I've met him somewhere."

"But he was speeding; you know it was Morven's car. Buck'll soon own the law as he does the State. Dollars does it every time."

Bob Bailey pulled his grizzled mustache, and tightened his belt.

"He don't own no law, Rowdy," he said. "And since we're mentioning it, I warn yer there's going to be no more talk of shootings, no more mine burning or wrecking property in this county. Last time was enough."

Roddy Crawford, as president of the Peaceful Valley Fruit Growers' Association, could always draw a crowd with his harangues. People now appeared at doorways and heads in windows.

"Are you trying to fasten that dynamiting on me, sheriff? Outsiders did that blow-up. A bunch of wabblers. What do yer mean by 'warning'?"

Roddy had dropped his voice, and Sally no longer smiled as she put her hand on his arm, for Roddy was liable to sudden breaks when he thus grew tense. She had not forgotten that attempted destruction of Morven's smelters, three years before, and Roddy's wrath at the suspicion that, for a time, had been fastened upon him. She threw an appealing look at Bailey, who relaxed from officialdom to tolerance.

"Just this, Roddy," he explained. "I ain't trying to insinooate nothin'. Them wabblers are servin' their time for that crime, and yer can't try the same case twice; that's settled. But incitements to violence in a public place is agin' the law. Morven's got wire fences round his mine now, and a lot of tough characters working for him. He's just come from one scrap, and is ready for another. Yer heard what happened last week. The mine owners used machine guns. Morven brought these fellers from the East. I tell yer, the status quo is near b'iling p'int. Seems to me that chauffeur——"

The mild eyes of the sheriff wandered up the road, and he forgot Roddy Crawford in a larger issue.

"Back pedal, Rowdy," he said presently, "and wait a minute."

The big fellow, with that alacrity and decision which had kept him in office for many years, went inside, and returned immediately with a piece of paper. A half tone of a man's face was printed on the paper, and also some letter press which barely folded back out of sight.

"Was that Buck Morven's chauffeur?" he asked Roddy.

Neither Roddy nor the crowd could be sure of the likeness; nobody had noticed much beyond Buck Morven, but everybody could guess the significance of that old and faded handbill and imagine its letter press.

"You think that chauffeur's a crook?" asked Bevins, wide-eyed.

"Dunno yet; but all I want to say is, if Buck Morven is using thugs and crooks to look after him and his property, it's just as well not to stir up trouble. That's all for to-day."

BAILEY went into his office and shut his door. Bevins began saying that Bailey was foolish. He recalled now that he had seen the chauffeur, who was a nice young fellow, not at all like that scowling face on the handbill. Roddy got into his car, without a word.

"Didn't yer say something about a bicycle tire for yer boy?" inquired Bevins.

"That'll hev to wait," said Roddy shortly, grasping the wheel, as if the car was a pony to be broken.

"Aw, shucks! Take yer time," advised Bevins, beaming. "I've got kids myself. Buck Morven's grand chariotting makes me feel like somebody. He's going to do something for Independence yet. Did yer say one tire or two?"

"None!" bawled Roddy, kicking in his gears, and driving the rusty, rickety car-of-all-work along the street till he was out of the town.

Sally had tried to take advantage of Bevins' offer, but Roddy Crawford would not permit his credit to be extended by that flash of Morven's magnificence. Sally was silent; she knew when to give Roddy his head; that pride of his sometimes had to be allowed its way. She

could wait, and remind Bevins of his promise later.

Roddy drove past the orchards and truck gardens of the lower valley, and then turned aside at the rougher road to the foothills. Morven's roadster had vanished in the long shadows now spreading down from the mountaintops; the edges of the ranges hardened to dark contours against the clear evening; that smoke, now nearer and thicker, became an ugly smudge across the gold and green of the it skyward, till it hung as a dirty veil sunset; the winds in the canyons blew between them and the purity of the snows. Roddy coughed, as he inhaled and tasted its sulphur. He cursed, coupling the smoke with Morven's name.

"I heard that the doctor said that smell was healthy," ventured Sally.

"I wonder what Buck paid that doctor. He'll pull that when we reach the supreme court. Healthy? Ever hear what copper and silver mines does to men? Ever see a leaded man? Wish I had leaded him with a .45. A feller that has to use crooks for cops!"

"I believe Bailey just got out that handbill to scare you," said Sally. "I don't believe Buck would employ a crook."

"He would. 'Birds of a feather.'"

"Now, Roddy; you really don't think Buck's a crook," said Sally with spirit.

"I do. No man can make money the way he does and hev clean hands. That's why he went East. You hev to be straight out here. Now he's bringing in his thugs. Poisoning the valley more. Like his doctors, his lawyers, his judges and his politicians—all dancing to his dollars."

"Roddy," said Sally, trying hard to smile, "you're talking just like a wabble on his soap box."

"No wonder; look at that crik! Ask the trout that used to be in it. Poisoned—every one."

From the trestle bridge they were now driving over, even in the dimming light, that creek did look a villainous swirl of verdigris. The torrent, that had sprung crystal clear and sparkling with bubbles from the snow, had been fouled by pumpings from the mine and the seepage from the rains off the slag heaps.

"This bridge ain't safe no more. That water is rotting the piles. By thunder, I wish the old days were back and we could gun him off the ranges!"

Sally was too wise to say more, for the fouling of the creek had been the main point for the orchardists' case. They had lost in the lower courts, for there were other creeks still fresh. Roddy alone depended on this one, and he was told he could dig wells or canals.

It had been a mining State originally, and the fruit men were as sheep-herders to the old cow-punchers, once Morven had revived the old lode and brought back the adventurous, chance-seeking spirit of the mining era.

The road rounded a spur, and they could now hear the trucks carrying slag and see the flashes, as these were emptied when the white-hot liquid fire was spilled over the dump, a trickling cataract of molten glass gradually fading to a red glow.

THEN Roddy saw another glow on the road ahead, and they came on Morven and his chauffeur, standing in the road and changing a tire. Roddy tried to drive past quickly, but the glare from the slag heap lit his face; and Morven recognized him.

"Hello, Rowdy? And Sally, too! How's the girl? Why, you look younger than ever."

Sally's hand on his arm had forced Roddy to stop; and now Buck was warmly shaking Sally's hand.

"Kiddies well?" asked Buck.

"Yes," she answered.

"The idea of you, Sally, having two kids. Don't believe it; never happened. We're all back on the old ranch again, and your dad's just home from marketing the steers. Excuse me; I forgot your father was dead. But back here, I feel as if nothing could die. This valley is worth all their Rivas. Just smell those pine needles! And I just saw Shasta daisies."

Sally well understood that Buck was trying to cover up the awkwardness of this meeting by his heartiness. The stars were now out, brighter and larger than anywhere else, as if fitting themselves for

the magnificence of the Sierras; the night winds rustled a lullaby from the pines, and the poisoned creek was still musical. The last sunlight was creeping up the silvery faces of the peaks, though the valley was now full of the night. A coverlet of peace seemed to be dropping from the stars. The valley must have prompted Morven to this tactful enthusiasm. Sally smiled.

But Roddy sat rigidly, without offering his hand. Morven was greeting them as if the long battle in the courts had been a mere dispute over poker, hot while it lasted, forgotten when decided. Didn't Buck remember they had appealed to the supreme court?

"I thought it was you I passed in Independence," continued Morven. "but I couldn't wait. I'm coming over to see you to-morrow or the next day. Got something to talk to you about, Roddy."

"Don't think you and me have anything to talk about," answered Roddy slowly.

"Oh, that fool case? I had to fight you for the stockholders. You'll lose your appeal and your costs, too. You can't enjoin a natural development. Let's forget it for a while, and you and Sally come and have dinner with me to-morrow. I'll show you I haven't forgotten how to rustle a cowboy meal."

"With sulphur trimmings and copperas sauce! Can't yer smell nothing but pine needles? I don't eat with you no more, Buck Morven."

Roddy juttet out his profile into the glow of Morven's headlights; he looked like a pecking eagle. Morven laughed a little, the cynical hard laugh of the cities. He was as tall as Roddy, but whiter in the face; he was much stouter, and his jaws had become jowls; he now dropped the brusque accent of the ranges they had recalled to him.

"I'm sorry you feel that way about it, Roddy."

His metallic politeness was even more irritating to Roddy.

"There's only one thing can make you sorry, Buck Morven, and that's losing a nickel from yer pile. Once you went East, you got gold-filled brains, copper-lined feelings and a silver-plated con-

science. I hev nothing in common with a man locoed with money."

"I admit I like making money, Roddy," said Morven steadily. "And don't forget you had your chance. You have it still. That stock is still waiting for you."

Roddy indignantly kicked in his power. "I wouldn't take your whole mine for one acre of arable land. I'll live to see you and it bust, and these hills everlastingly green with grass and pines and firs, not scabby with your rotten copper."

Morven lifted his hat to Sally, a formality he had entirely forgotten in the warmth of his first greeting.

"Sorry I spoke. Good evening."

Roddy drove off, satisfied that he had said to Morven what he had often wanted to shout in court. He took the turn that led off the main road to his homestead, and his satisfaction gave way to its guilty opposite. Sally had not spoken; she had been pinching his arm all the time he talked to Buck, but he had paid no attention. He did not try to look at her, for he was certain he had bolted somewhat beyond her limits.

CHAPTER II.

VARMINTS.

SALLY found trouble awaiting her at the homestead. Billy had taken advantage of his parents' day-long absence, to go roaming over the foothills. He was accustomed to these excursions; Roddy encouraged him, and the bicycle was to enable him to go further afield. But today he had taken his younger brother, "Buster," with him. He had not only exhausted Buster, but both of them had fallen into the creek. Buster was sick and crying, while Billy stammeringly confessed his fear that the youngster had swallowed some of that green water.

Sally looked up her household remedies, and ordered Roddy to go up to the mine and phone the doctor at Independence. Roddy, still irate with Morven and all that Morven's advent threatened, thought that perhaps Sally was needlessly alarmed, and suggested going back in his car for the doctor.

"I'd rather not use Morven's phone," he answered.

Sally blazed, something she rarely did. "Not for your boy, Roderick Crawford?" she demanded.

Roddy weakly withdrew his objection; these rare flashes from the heart of his wife made him uncomfortable; it was as if she had become suddenly a new and terrifying creature.

He went out to crank his car, when Sally called to him. Buster had become suddenly well at hearing the man of physic was to be summoned, and was now bawling healthily for his supper. The doctor was not needed. Billy was saving himself from a threatened thrashing by reiterating that he had told Buster not to drink that water, and by enthusiastically displaying his knife. The open blade was half covered with a thin coating of freshly deposited, beautifully brown copper.

"You see, Ma," he was explaining to his deeply interested mother, "we put our knives in the water and they get all coppery like this. Doesn't take a minute. Jimmy Boyle is putting in old cans, and he says we can sell the copper."

Roddy gave the boy a cuff on the ear, snatched the knife from him, bade him go to bed and never play round the mine again. Billy, amazed at this violence, clung to his mother; he had never seen his father so angry, nor his mother so white.

"He shall play there if he wants to," said Sally quietly. "But you'd better get off your wet clothes, Billy, and go to bed. I'll bring you your supper."

Billy was kissed and dismissed; then Sally set herself to say to Roddy what had been germinating in her mind since that flare-up with Morven on the way home. It was not enough, she had decided, to sit back and think things "funny." The boys had to be considered, and it had become necessary to spur on, as well as rein in, the boys' father.

She put it up to him.

"If Billy wants to be a miner, Roddy," she began, "why shouldn't he? You must admit mining pays better than fruit growing."

Roddy stared blankly at his hitherto placid helpmate; this was the first time in all their happy life together that she

had openly admitted his financial inefficiency; it was a bitter revelation to him.

Dazzled by Morven, like Bevins, was his first thought—just like a woman.

"Billy is a born miner, Roddy. Last week he climbed as far as Blue Lake, and found these—"

Out of a box containing her trinkets, she drew a tobacco can, from which she poured out a small heap of curious stones into a saucer; from her care not to spill any, these fragments of quartz crystal, malachite and even pieces of native copper might have been diamonds.

"Billy is top of his class in nature studies. These days they teach children to see things as well as learn from books. It's not turkey or trout Billy goes hunting for, but these pretty stones. You wanted to be a gardener when your father made you stick to cattle. And if Billy wants to be a miner, he's going to be encouraged."

VERY awkwardly, Roddy played with stones which he had not been taught to see, though his fingers, used to grubbing about the roots of his heart's treasure, his plants and his trees, told him there was more than mere earth in them. Buck used to bring home stones like these, when they were bunkies together in the old ranch; they had started Buck prospecting. Yes, Buck was behind all this, he concluded, while Sally, preciously, put back the stones in the can.

"What's eating you, gel?" he said softly. "'Tain't just Billy or Buster, is it? I know I ain't made good with you or them. You want me to take that stock of Buck's, quit here, and start somewhere else. You want to let his poison smoke drive me out, and have him say he settled out of court. Settled—with some gold-lettered paper not worth a case of rotten peaches. *They'd* feed pigs; his paper won't. No, ma'am. Billy can play round the slag heaps all he wants, but if you believe in Buck Morven's way more 'n mine—"

He stopped at the look in his wife's eyes; she had accepted his challenge. Billy's prospecting had started this plain speaking. She determined she would prospect further, dig down and dig out

that poisonous streak, more virulent and destructive than Morven's copper, which was ruining her man and threatening her happiness and perhaps spoiling her boys' future.

"What's eating you, Roddy?" she retorted. "I'll tell you, since you don't seem to know yourself. You're jealous of Buck because he's got ahead of you. That's it; that's why you fight him; and, since you want to know—some of Buck's ways I do like. He wants to be rich, and you just don't. And yet you're jealous of him because he is rich. You're just muddle-headed, Roddy."

"I don't want to be rich?" gasped Roddy, at her major and most astounding charge.

"No; you just want to see things grow. You're a gardener merely for fun. Buck wants to make things pay. So do I. I want money, lots of money, to give our kiddies all we missed. I don't want you to be wasting your time, your nerve and your temper, hating a man luckier than yourself. You want to think Buck's a crook, that all successful men are crooks, just to save yourself the trouble of trying to be successful. It's a wabby's excuse, Roddy, when you come to the bottom of it."

"You mean to call me a 'wabby'?"

"Not as you mean. You work hard enough; you're just too lazy to change your opinions. You like growing things, Roddy, but you won't grow young. My children are going to grow as far and as big as the Lord and these hills will let them."

Her low voice broke into a shrill defiance as, picking up the box of Billy's treasures, she sought her kitchen.

Roddy went out under his trees to light a pipe, to avoid trying to answer what he knew was unanswerable. Sally had dug down to the roots of his pride and pugnacity. Automatically, he lit a match to look at his buds as well as light his pipe. The buds were small and backward. The orchards down the valley were more advanced; that creeping reek from the smelters mingled with his tobacco; undoubtedly it was stunting his trees. When Buck had his full complement of smelters going, it would be worse.

Between the trees, he could see Sally moving across the windows of the kitchen; he could hear the prattle of his children; his pugnacity toward Morven, under Sally's probing, began to turn against himself. "A gardener for fun," she had called him. Perhaps he had only been a husband for fun, and a father for fun.

After supper he asked Sally if he might have those stones Billy had found, and said he was going to have a talk with the boy. Sally, who was sewing, told him he could get the can from the box. As he took it out, he noticed a small bracelet; he remembered Buck had given it to Sally some time; she had not worn it for years.

AT the entrance of Roddy, Billy sat up in bed, expecting trouble. His littered little room was an epitome of his many enthusiasms, an untidy museum of his abandoned interests. The bicycle tires he had attempted to repair with insulating tape stood in one corner, and his pea rifle in another. The hanging shelves he had made himself contained bottles of all the bugs he had collected in the orchard. Billy knew more about these than his father did, and had once shown Roddy the difference between an apple-leaf roller and a railroad worm. Beside these was an abandoned crystal radio, for just now Billy was tired of radio. A new set of shelves, that had a habit of sagging and scattering their contents over the floor and ultimately through the house, contained his latest findings off the slag heaps, iridescent pieces of stone, queer, globular masses of dark-green glass, vitrified from the smelters, and, most curious of all, handfuls of hairy filaments, combed fine and silky, glass that had been blown by the wind when hot and liquid. These little but piercing needles had also been blown through the house; but so far Roddy had not noticed that dangerous shining dust which Sally tried so hard to keep out of the food.

"Where did you get these stones, son?" asked Roddy.

Billy, with that uneasy conscience an investigating boy must necessarily be burdened with, began a glib recital:

"Didn't get them to-day, Pop. I wouldn't let Buster go so far."

"Get them round the mine?"

"No, Pop. They won't let us fellers round the mine no more; they won't let us go down in the cages, neither."

Billy stopped suddenly; the admission that he had been down the mine, when the old crew had been working it, might lead to more restraints on his liberty.

"I got these up by Blue Lake, Pop," he said hastily.

"That's a long way, son," pondered Roddy, as he considered this curious, perky, little pink-cheeked boy that he called his son.

"No, 'tain't, Pop. You turn off the road and take Bandy's trail. Then, 'stead of going along the trail, you go into the brush and right up the ridge. That takes you top of the glacier, and you go down that——"

"You didn't go on the glacier, boy?" demanded Roddy, reverting to a little sternness, for that glacier was risky going, even for men.

"It didn't hurt, Pop. I could jump over the cracks easily. I'm careful, awful careful, Pop——"

Half an hour's converse with this son that he had so taken for granted, this adventurous, curious, risk-taking boy of thirteen, was as great a revelation to Roddy as the rebellion of Sally.

She was right; that boy would have to be allowed his own trail; he knew his way over every level of the mine, and he could discover short cuts over the ranges; he had distinguishing names for his stones, as well as for the insect pests of the orchards; there was something in that boy not his. Roddy started to leave the room, with a strange feeling of reverence that hitherto had only been awakened in him by plants. The boy, too, was a growing thing, and more of a mystery.

"Good night, son. Play all you want—anywhere; but take care of yourself."

"Oh, I do, Pop. I'm more careful than Jimmy Boyle. He wanted to get them new fellers at the mine to shoot at us."

"What?" asked Roddy, alarmed.

"Oh, I wouldn't let him. We—I mean, Jimmy was seeing if we could shoot the fire from the slag heaps. You know—

make it splash like water; and that big stiff Maginnis came out and said he'd shoot us."

"Did he shoot?"

"No; but Jimmy tried to make him. We were behind the rocks. Jimmy wants to join the marines and be hard boiled and hear bullets shot at yer——"

"No shooting around the mine, Billy, or I'll take your pea rifle away. I'll speak to Boyle's father."

In an instant Billy was out of bed, a little bunch of pajamas, angrily confronting and defying his father.

"You got no right to sneak on Jimmy, Pop! 'Twasn't Jimmy. I thought of it first. It's quite safe. Them fellers can't shoot for nuts. I seen 'em trying to hit a turkey. You ain't going to be a sneak, Pop?"

"No, son; I'm not."

Roddy took in his arms this man in miniature who, after all, was so like himself, in his loyalty, in his sense of fairness; and then he left him.

RODDY returned to the sitting room. Somehow, discovering what a son meant had made him feel younger and less of a failure. He told Sally he intended going over to the mine next morning to have that talk Morven had offered, and then hastily turned upstairs to bed.

Sally made no comment, asked no questions. She knew she had hurt him, and when Roddy Crawford was hurt, like most mountain-bred things, he was best left to heal himself.

Next morning, after a very early breakfast, Roddy walked between his trees to take a short cut to the mine. He first looked at the sky like a sailor, for colder weather had been promised. The blurred edges of the snows against the blue sky showed him that there was much wind in the peaks, though the sky was clear. There was always a chance of a sudden blizzard this time of the year, though the cold was not likely to last. At any rate, Billy knew what to do; Billy would be extra conscientious after last night's talk, and now that he had been bidden to stay home to help his mother that day.

Roddy walked slowly, in order to think, for his sudden determination to interview

Morven looked more complex in the light of morning. He really had been curious to find out what Morven had to say, but primarily he wanted to talk business with Morven, mainly because Sally despised his lack of business. Sally, he was certain, would like them to be friends again. Sally said he could not change his viewpoint about men who made money. Roddy was willing to try.

After emerging from his trees and crossing a patch of uncultivated land, and a little valley beyond a rise hidden from his house, he was stopped by a new barbed-wire fence. He recalled that the sheriff had spoken of these fences which Morven had erected all round his holdings, but this was the first time he had encountered one. He saw signs against trespassing—big lettered, and threatening. His old bitterness revived. There were no big fences, no signs that would serve against that thick, yellow smoke tumbling from the stack behind the next hill. He put his hand on a post and leaped over the fence, clearing the wire with agility.

"Hey there; don't yer see them signs?"

A heavy-set man appeared over the top of the rise, bellowing at him, and the man wore a belt with a gun slung at it.

"It's all right; I want to see Mr. Morven," said Roddy, ascending to him.

The man was heavy jowled, scowling, set in the jaw, and utterly lacking in Western responsiveness to Roddy's reason for his trespass. At first sight, Roddy thought the fellow was an out-of-door man, but as he came closer he saw that the man's ruddiness was an artificial flush internally acquired. The man's little, narrow eyes were ocularly frisking Roddy—for concealed dynamite, perhaps, Roddy thought.

"I got my orders, mister," he growled, condescending to use but one side of his mouth.

"I'll square you; Mr. Morven knows me."

Roddy walked past this surly watchman, for he was certain it was the Maginnis who had threatened to shoot at Billy. Roddy determined to ignore him; that was Sally's way of dealing with unpleasant people. Since last night Roddy had

been thinking much of Sally's ways; he was surprised when he recalled how many times those ways had saved him from making a fool of himself. Roddy always went cross lots whenever he walked, and, but for Sally, he would have stopped to ask this man what he meant. There would at least have been an unpleasant argument; a fellow like that did not belong in Peaceful Valley; he was a "varmint."

From the top of the hill Roddy could now see the sheds of the mine, and farther down, the cottage of the resident manager. The rattle of the trucks carrying the slag was now louder; he could hear the gasp of the pumps, and the cages rising and falling to the tinkling of bells; a steady roar of flame came from the smelting shed, and the combined reek of coal dust and noxious gases invaded his lungs. That mine was as much a varmint as its owner or its watchmen, as much an excrescence on the valley. Not a blade of green showed between the rocks in the poisoned soil; the mine was a canker on the county, an outrage to the snow peaks and their flying buttresses of sweet-scented pine and fir.

Roddy walked steadily downward, determined to meet that mine and its owner; a woman and two children were urging him.

He crossed a gutter which was pouring its green flood toward the creek; his instinctive anger at it was checked by recalling Billy's experiment with his knife. He climbed the little hillock around the main shaft. Then he was again hailed, this time by the chauffeur, Frank.

Frank was young, better dressed even than Morven, but, seen by daylight, was too white in the face, showed too many teeth with an unpleasant smile, and was altogether too furtive, too stealthy for Roddy not to class him as a varmint. He was like the man whose picture the sheriff had displayed.

"I want to see Mr. Morven," demanded Roddy, in reply to Frank's inquiry of his business.

"Yer can't; he's in conference."

That imposing alibi of the city man was something new to Roddy. What kind of apple sauce was this foxy-faced

fellow handing him, thought Roddy? Roddy did not know a man for hundreds of miles round whom he could not call upon at any time of the day or night. But any possibility of Roddy's anger running away with him was averted by Morven appearing at the door of the office and heartily asking him to enter in true Western style. Roddy accepted the invitation, and emptied that tobacco can containing Billy's specimens on the office table.

"I want you to look at these, Buck," said Roddy.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIND.

WHAT do you want me to do?" asked Morven, with the same impersonal courtesy he had assumed the night before to blunt Roddy's insults.

"See if it's worth anything," replied Roddy, taking his cue from the man of business. "If so, work it and split with me."

"I won't ask you where you found these—" began Morven.

"I'll tell you. Near the glacier by Blue Lake. I want you to come up and look it over right away."

"Why the rush? Any one else in on this?"

Roddy knew he had overplayed his eagerness; that was a mistake; business, he guessed, was very much like poker, and he used to be good at poker.

"No," he chanced, remembering that Billy had told him the other youngsters in the valley had been also demoralized by the mine, and were as eager treasure seekers as himself.

"I'll send Bryce to report," said Morven, rising to call in his manager, who had stepped out of the office when Roddy appeared.

"I show this find to no one but you," said Roddy hastily, for his determination to prove he was Morven's equal in that game called business must not be interfered with; it was to be one against one.

Roddy cherished no belief that his Billy had found a bonanza, but then, he had no belief that he was able to judge bonanzas. Roddy had not changed into a money grubber just because his wife had

reproached him. Roddy, six feet of lean bone and muscle, only wanted to play one hand with this man of business, once his physical equal, now heavy and corpulent. It was the rivalry of boys sublimated to a higher plane, though Roddy, unused to watching things grow inside himself, was quite unaware of this.

"Isn't it staked, then?" asked Morven, after a long, searching look at Roddy.

"No."

Morven dropped his poker face and became expansive and human.

"So you're going to trust me, Roddy Crawford?" he said, grinning quizzically.

"Yes; you see it was Sally's idea."

Roddy lied deliberately. The impulse to see Morven was wholly his own; but it worked, for Morven's caution disappeared. Morven came out of the office, and ordered horses to be saddled and packs prepared. Roddy stood by the top of the shaft where the cages were bringing up the ore, watching men hop to Morven's orders. Morven, the six-million-dollar man, had started Roddy's way when Roddy played his queen.

Maginnis and Frank stood without, like alert, distrustful watchdogs; but the mechanics of the mine, the men at the cages, and the men at the smelters paid little attention to the boss preparing for a long day's ride. Morven then appeared from the cottage, dressed for the ranges in a loose flannel shirt, a soft hat, and heavy velveteens he had borrowed from Bryce. In these he looked more like the man he used to be.

As they rode up the road, Morven showed Roddy that he had not forgotten his riding, though he was much heavier in the saddle.

"You lead the way, Rowdy," said Morven gayly, using his old bunkie's nickname. "Say, it's good to be in a Western saddle again. All the riding I've had East has been trotting round parks."

Morven was puffing from those first quick miles, but his grim office look was cleared by that spirited pony taking him higher and higher up the hills.

Roddy turned off at Bandy's trail—the long horse trail leading round the hills to the far shores of Blue Lake. Roddy knew the trail from his rare days of hunt-

ing, and Morven remembered it. The ascent became suddenly steeper, zigzagging up between the pines, and the two men had to lean forward as their mounts padded softly over the path, carpeted with pine needles. The air grew chilly, the underbrush scantier, and the pines farther apart where the blasts on the ridges had thinned them. They were approaching the snow line. Patches of unmelted drifts could be seen here and there under the shelter of roots and rocks, and between the black ranks of the trunks, they could see the shining, white slants of the snow peaks and their mother-of-pearl shadows. They rode slowly to save their horses from the exhaustion of breathing the thin air of that altitude; the beasts were now splashing in mud; little rivulets from the melting snows, now but a few hundred feet above them, trickling across the trail.

"Going back into winter," observed Morven. "I met a fellow in Paris once who wouldn't believe we could get three seasons in a day's ride out here. Don't we keep on? This trail leads to the lake, doesn't it?"

Morven, whose memory of the mountains was reviving with every mile, was puzzled by Roddy's dismounting near the summit of the last rise.

"It does," said Roddy, tying his horse's reins to a pine branch; "but it's shorter to break through the brush and foot it up the ridge; that'll bring us on top of the glacier. It's a tough climb, and perhaps you would prefer to take the long way round?"

Morven was breathing heavily; he had not yet oriented himself to the altitude; beads of perspiration ran down his face; he had to burst open his shirt collar for relief.

"Why should I, Rowdy?" he said, dismounting and tethering his horse alongside Roddy's.

"Well, you see, Buck," replied Roddy, grinning, "you've put on some pounds since last you done any of this off-trail stuff."

"That's just why I need it, Rowdy," said Morven, appreciative at Roddy's easy use of his nickname. "Don't you go bragging about your youthful waist-

line, Rowdy Crawford. What I've put on, I can take off."

The two men had arrived at the old personal banterings of their ranch days, at that mutual capacity for giving and taking insults which holds men together.

Morven led the way now through the brush, tearing aside thorns and brambles, seeking for footholds on the slippery rocks, using the ledges as if they were flesh-reducing ladders in gymnasiums, feeling that the mountains were giving him back his youth.

Roddy had chosen this stiff way to reach Blue Lake, primarily because it had been Billy's. Billy had ridden his bicycle out here, planted it in the brush by the road below, climbed this trail where the bicycle could not be ridden, and tackled that ridge. Roddy, too, was recovering the youth he had not lost but had been merely letting slip. He had been becoming inert through his narrowing interests; the majestic immensities of the mountains were reawakening his old spirit of contest. That climb up the rugged ridge, up stark cliffs, over a rubbly deposit of boulders, treacherous with snow in their crevasses, became a physical rivalry between two mature men spurred on by a thirteen-year-old boy.

"I wish I had a weighing machine. Bet I've lost ten pounds," laughed Morven, when they reached the summit of the ridge.

Below them was the rock-straited face of the glacier, winding round the shoulders of the snow peaks, and disappearing far away in a narrow wedge. To their right and far below was Blue Lake, an immense turquoise, magical in color, set between sharp edges of ice on one side, and dark-green tufts of pine on the other. The wind was keen and cold, though the sun was warm and blinding. Morven lit a perfecto, and offered one to Roddy. Roddy refused the cigar.

"You're right, Roddy. I've got symptoms of a second wind coming. That smoke might mean a side stitch at this stage." Morven threw away his cigar. "Now, Roddy, lead on."

Roddy had been staring at the peaks, at the illimitable perspectives of ridge behind ridge, at that lake which seemed

a piece fallen out of the sky, at two circling eagles overhead, with their gray wings glinting like gold. He was recalled from his enjoyment of the prospect by this curt command of Morven's. He plunged down the hillside that was the right bank of the glacier; he had not come up here to indulge in ecstasies, to steep himself in the infinities of this garden that should make men gods; he was here on a purely commercial proposition.

HE took off his pack, and advised Morven to do so. Leaving the packs by a cluster of frost-bitten junipers, the two men dropped to the surface of the glacier. The ice was rough traveling, with long cracks wide and deep enough to swallow and hold a man who slipped—yet Billy had come this way. When they reached the edge of the glacier, they went back to the hillside, and descended to the foot of the ice wall. Here, on a beach of the lake, were piled masses of ice, rocks dropped from the moraines, and the heaped debris carried down for fifty miles from the ranges beyond by that slow but ever-flowing frozen river.

"Now, where's your bonanza?" demanded Morven, seemingly irritated by the roundabout and difficult route Roddy had led him, but really keenly intent on getting to the heart of the business that had brought him.

Vaguely Roddy looked around. Ahead of him, the ice cliffs ended in the water; small white birds were drifting away across the lake to where the waters flowed down the valley; behind him and beyond rose the two ridges embanking the glacier, and thinly covered with snow. Billy must have come up here on a warmer day, when the earth was bare. If any of those rock patches still uncovered were cupreous, Roddy had not the prospector's eye to learn. Roddy was plainly at a loss.

"Why the hell didn't you mark the spot?" demanded Morven, ill temperedly.

"Well, I didn't exactly find it myself; it was my boy, Billy."

Morven's eyes gleamed suspiciously.

"Then why didn't you bring him along? There's no ore here. Those are not ore-bearing rocks."

"That's ore, isn't it?" demanded

Roddy, thrusting the specimens under Morven's nose.

"Yes, that's ore," drawled Morven quietly; "but how do I know it came from here? I've met salted mines before."

Roddy's jaws snapped, though he put the stones back into his pocket unhurriedly; his face hardened to the carvings of the ice cliffs behind him.

"What exactly do you mean by 'salted?' I tell you, my boy found these stones round here."

Morven secured his foothold in that rubble of ice and gravel. He knew Roddy Crawford's quiet way of beginning a fight; his rowdiness meant nothing, but when he grew still and purring, Buck Morven knew of old that action was imminent.

Buck Morven had never hesitated to follow the most phantomlike of prospects; he was equally quick in rejecting a poor one; he would not back water.

"I have to assume the chance of every claim being salted," he said deliberately. "I always start by regarding every prospector as a probable crook."

All Roddy's old hatred of the man was revived and intensified a thousandfold by this suspicion of him and his Billy; his fists were doubling, when a glassy splintering crash made him look upward. The ice wall was slipping above their heads. Roddy had just time to utter a shout of warning and leap aside, before the face of the cliff turned on its base and toppled in a foam of splinters in one white cataract onto that narrow beach. Morven, who was closer to the water, only escaped those tumbling ice blocks by leaping backward into the lake. Roddy climbed over the ice and gave him a hand ashore. Both men were as white as the snow; the water was near freezing, and Morven was wet to the waist, but Roddy was the colder of the two.

"I must light a fire and dry out," said Morven, the first to recover his equanimity.

They reascended the hillside to where they had left their packs. Morven's matches were wet; Roddy lit the fire. That ugly suspicion, which had reared its head between the two men for a moment, seemed forgotten. Morven, toast-

ing himself on alternate sides before the big blaze of juniper bushes, was smiling and smacking his lips curiously.

"Drink this coffee, and stow this," said Roddy, extracting the thermos bottle and the sandwiches from a pack. "You're too soft, Buck, to stand wet clothes after that climb. Swallow it boiling, man."

RODDY was gruff, still perturbed by their narrow escape, and fretting a little over Morven's accusation. He had not Morven's power of putting his feelings aside. For years he had been loudly calling for the rough justice of the old quick-shooting frontiers. A moment ago he felt as though he might kill; but that cataract of ice which had nearly killed them both had chilled his hatred to contempt.

Morven had not tasted the coffee; and roughly, Roddy again bade him drink it.

"Not just now, Rowdy," replied Morven; "I'm tasting something better."

To Roddy's amazement, Morven began sucking the pocket of his coat which was still wet.

"I think maybe your boy was right, Rowdy; that lake tastes coppery," he said, very slowly and abstractedly.

His eyes were searching the face of that long river of ice so like a sleeping, gigantic, prehistoric saurian, with its ribbed and crinkled surface, its suggestion of something alive creeping out of the hills beyond, something spawned by the farthest and most dominating peak—the mighty summit of Shasta.

"By gosh, Roddy Crawford, I believe we're onto something," he said, with a slow, unusual smile and a strange light in his eyes.

Swallowing the coffee in one gulp, Morven started madly down the hill, till he reached the pile of shattered ice at the foot of the new face of the glacier. Roddy followed, uncomprehendingly, but catching the excitement of that voice and scamper.

"Look out, Buck; that ice is going to split some more!" he called, catching up with Morven, who was on his knees scraping up the shredded ice with bare hands at the foot of the cliff.

"It will save you the trouble of going gunning for me, Rowdy; but not even a silver bullet could get me now. Look at that!"

Leaning out of the hole he had cleared for himself in the ice, standing on the rocky bottom of the glacier bed, Morven held out his hand. It was full of worn and crushed minerals, with native silver as well as native copper.

"It's a new era in mining, Rowdy; no one has ever thought of the glaciers. This glacier has been mining these hills for centuries, gutting out gullies——"

An ugly splash came from the lake farther out, where the glacier dipped directly into the water; a white berg floated slowly away, and its wave washed their feet.

"Come out of that, Buck!" cried Roddy.

"You don't get my idea, Rowdy. Don't you see? I found a little placer. The old placers were made by rivers of water tearing down mother lodes. How about ice placers? Here's a river of ice been grinding these hills ever since they were built."

"Man, you can't mine ice."

"I can melt it, can't I? How about hot-water sluicing? I'll go my last dollar on anything I believe in. I know now it's not salted. If you had handed those stones to me, and I had seen you pick them up yourself, I could not be sure; I've seen gold fired into a drive from a shotgun. I've seen the earth they made crucibles of salted to give a false estimate when it was ground up with the ore. There's no trick invented by man's brain that I'm not ready for. But here I'm sure; that ice broke six feet in. It couldn't be salted. No man placed these specimens that I picked up at the bottom of a hundred feet of ice and six feet in. Your boy's all right, and so are you, Roddy."

Morven climbed out of the hole, and grasped Roddy with his frozen fingers. Physically, he was almost exhausted; his fingers, however, were able to grip Roddy's with the fervor of their old friendship, and the words that came babbling from his lips silenced Roddy's amazement and unbelief.

CHAPTER IV.

A TRIANGULAR DUEL.

RODDY had to follow Morven up the hillside, over and across the slippery, rugged, crevasse-cracked glacier, for yards along either bank, till they had planted cairns, sticks—markings of any kind that would establish their claim to mine everything in and under those acres of ice.

"First thing is to stake it," declared Morven, when his commercial sanity returned.

"Stake what?"

"This glacier. All the law will give us, and a bit over. Come on."

"Of all the fool propositions, Buck Morven!" Roddy managed to gasp, as he was dragged after Morven's heels by that surprising lode of unsuspected energy unlocked in the fat man by those fragments of copper.

"Let's eat now, Roddy. I can't read you my prospectus till I feed."

Morven led the way back to the fire and the food as eagerly as he had staked his claim. He devoured the sandwiches as a ravenous animal tears its kill; he swallowed cup after cup of coffee, and then he lit a perfecto.

"I suppose it does look crazy," he then remarked, with a meditative grin. "I wonder what the market will do to me, when they hear I've staked a glacier."

Roddy was silent; he had expostulated to his utmost; he had been compelled to follow this money-mad maniac. But he could not keep up with the flying leaps of that maniac's mind, for he knew nothing of stock-market operations.

"Rowdy, I'm going into this strong. It may be no good, and then it might make Butte look like a dime bank. But I'm going to find out what's under that ice. I may lose; but you can certainly win."

"Me? I'm not going to have a finger in it. I believe you're dippy with the altitude. You're not used to it. Cool off."

"I'll chance that. Perhaps the bears of Wall Street will think the same as you, and that's where you can gamble to win. Sell out your ranch. Go bear on every stock I'm interested in. Wait for the big drop that will come when Buck Morven is known to have staked out a glacier.

Sell on the rise when I show the specimens I've found. The market's a woman in indecision, Roddy—now up, now down. Catch her imagination with those bits of copper and silver, dug out of six feet of ice that nearly killed the prospectors. Man, can't you see the headlines? The Chilcoot Trail won't be in it with the rush."

Roddy, bewildered by these proposed machinations, caught only one intelligible phrase. He arose, fuming with the dull anger of a man bested in some unknown way. Physically, he was Morven's superior; morally he despised Morven. He had come up here to play a picaresque hand with this raker-in of illegitimate millions, and he found something of his old bunkie still in Buck Morven. Buck was riding this impossible broncho of a proposition as he used to chase steers. Vaguely, Roddy had to admit that, in some ways, Buck was and always had been the better man. Buck had seen the end of ranching when the trusts came in; Buck was always the first to pull up stakes and try for fresh fields; Buck was always ready to take the big chances, and had thoroughly outridden him in the gallop of life by whipping up his imagination.

"Sell my ranch? So that's your play?"

"Why not? Why work a dead loss? I never do. Wait till I put this up to Sally, Roddy," slyly suggested Morven, as he lay back among the stones by the fire, comfortably digesting and smoking.

"Leave Sally out of this," commanded Roddy.

"All right, I will; but you can't. It was her boy started all this. That's the kind of son I should have had."

Roddy twitched with impotent, unavailing, blind, brute anger. Morven, with his perfect, with his self-possession, his subtle appreciation of Roddy's domestic relations, humiliated the orchardist at every turn. Morven seemed to have an uncanny insight as to what Sally would do, and was appealing to Sally as a higher power. Morven seemed to be upsetting Roddy's pastoral Eden.

Roddy picked up his pack and strode up the hill. He could not trust himself to answer Buck. He felt as though he

could wring his neck and throw him into the lake. He climbed the ridge with long powerful strides and reaches, appeasing his pride by displaying his fine physical condition. The exhilarating air, the intoxicating altitude, the meal that had gone to Morven's head, had left himself sane; he triumphed with the fancy that he had "drunk Morven under the table." He could tell Sally he had followed a business trail to its foolish end—a crazy prospect of digging out a glacier and a crooked scheme of swindling. He had taken Morven's measure, and it was a mean one.

HE looked back from the top of the ridge; Morven was following slowly and painfully. Roddy smiled; he felt he could afford to.

"Wish you had an elevator, don't you, Buck?" he called.

Suddenly the sun faded; Roddy saw a bulging cloud advancing down the valley, blotting out the peaks, hiding ridge after ridge, and creeping down the glacier. It looked like a tremendous, bellying sail filled with wind.

He heard a cry, looked down the ridge, and saw that Morven was sitting down and nursing his foot. Roddy raced down to him. Morven had badly twisted his ankle; Roddy had to help him up the hill.

"We've got to hurry, Buck," he said. "Snow's coming."

The storm struck them as they reached the summit, a blinding drive of snow, a gale of arctic wind. The snow came every way at once; the winds were laden with drifts of soft, unpacked snow. It was impossible to see their way, and absolutely dangerous to attempt that precipitous descent to their horses. Blindly, they kept to the lesser declivity of the summit of the ridge; they probed with their feet; they groped with their hands for some safer way of getting down to their horses. Roddy took charge now, giving one arm to the support of the limping Morven.

Roddy's free hand was feeling along the roughened wall of a cliff that loomed up as a darker mass in that dim, gray world of swirling white. His hand struck at nothing, and went in; he had found a

cave smelling of bear, but empty. He dragged Morven in; they would have to wait there till the storm let up. Then, gathering all the sticks he could find before the snow covered them, he lit a fire at the mouth of the cave.

Morven was sitting down nursing his bad foot, and looked exhausted, Roddy thought.

"You'd better stay here, while I go down and untie the horses," said Roddy. "They'll find their way home. We can't let them freeze. We can stick it out here till to-morrow. Got enough firewood and food. The horses'll go to the mine, and they'll send somebody after us."

"Why must I stay here?" said Morven. "I can climb down, same as you. If you can reach the horses, I can. I can walk; this is nothing."

"You can't; you stay here," commanded Roddy. "You're puffing like an old flivver. I'll get you some of those pine branches before I go."

They had brushed through a few of the stunted outposts of pines on their way to the cave. Roddy took the little ax they had brought with them, and fought his way out into the storm again. He soon reappeared, dragging a small tree.

"There's enough to warm you. You'll be as well off as in a steam-heated flat. You Eastern dudes like to keep warm. Buck, you've paid out a lot of hard, real *man* for your millions. 'Tain't worth it, to my thinking. Lie down, and give that foot of yours a chance to rest."

Standing at the mouth of the cave, Roddy was cutting up the wood, with a glorious consciousness of his own strength.

"Never mind any more fire, Rowdy. I'm going down; not with you, but on my own trail," said Morven, gingerly trying out his foot.

"You can't; you'll blow out!" roared Roddy. "Think of your immense interests. The U. S.'d go bust if you pegged out, son. My patriotic duty won't allow the carburetor of Wall Street to go dead. No, Buck; you stay here till this blows over. I'll let the horses go; or better—tell you what—I'll ride down and organize a relief party of your plug-uglies. Maybe I'll send a wire to let Wall Street know you're on deck.

Stocks might wobble a bit if they knew their granddaddy was lost in the ranges, mightn't they?"

It was the old banter of the bunk houses on the ranches, but embittered and one-sided, for Morven was silently studying Roddy.

"It feels good to hear that old stuff," he remarked slowly. "How about a little bet, before we start?"

"What kind of bet?" asked Roddy, growing more serious.

"I'll bet you I'll stand anything you will. I can go where you go, and do what you do, and be the last to lie down. I'll go after the horses, or stick it out here with you till the snow clears. No relief parties; just you and me, Roddy, and the first man that squeals, loses."

"What'll you bet?" snapped Roddy.

"My mine against your orchard."

Roddy gasped.

"And—Sally," added Morven steadily.

Roddy's scoffing jocularly vanished; he glared across the fire at the set face of Morven.

"By heaven, I ought to kill you for that, Buck!"

"Poppycock!" scoffed Morven, in his turn. "You, who hated to kill a broken-legged pony! You're no killer. You never were. You're a soft-hearted, pig-headed, middle-aged muddler. You've grown soft, not me. I've been sitting in the toughest game in the world, with international crooks and sharps. I'm as hard as tungsten steel fired in hell, and I mean this bet."

"You've been talking to Sally," guessed Roddy.

"You know as little about women as you do about everything else. Does a woman have to be talked to? My career talks. You only got her by a fluke. Your pot of geraniums beat my pearl bracelet."

Roddy started as he remembered that old bracelet Sally was still treasuring; his geranium had long since died.

"I've made my way with no man's help, Roddy. I can get out of this without yours. Will you bet—my mine against your orchard and Sally?"

"Leave Sally out of this!"

"I can't," cut in Morven incisively. "Her throwing me down made me the

man I am. I'm the husband she ought to have had."

Roddy's hand was still clutching the ax; his face was beaded with drops that burned red in the firelight: a hoarse gurgle came from his throat.

"You might as well drop that ax, Roddy Crawford. If there's any killing to be done, let the mountains do it; you know you can't. Here——"

Morven drew out a pad, and wrote hastily upon it.

"This note will give you the stock I've been keeping for you. If I get lost in the drifts, or fall, or freeze, that note will prove we parted friends. No one will think you capable of forging my signature. You haven't enterprise enough."

In that cave that smelled like a zoo, thick with smoke that stung their eyes, this preposterous wager, made across a fire by a muddled, wet, exhausted man, unable to stand and suffering intense pain, though mentally clear and aggressive, began to look and sound like the fantasies of delirium.

"Are we both crazy?" gasped Roddy. "Perhaps," replied Morven, as he slipped that note into Roddy's pocket. "It's a good thing to go crazy sometimes. You said I was crazy to go into mining. Crazy wins sometimes, doesn't it? But Sally is not crazy. Let Sally decide."

"I won't have you talk of Sally that way!" shouted Roddy.

"I'm not insulting her. I'm free. My wife divorced me last week, and Sally has ample grounds to quit you."

The red glare that flooded into Roddy's eyeballs was more blinding to him than the fire, but instinctively, acting from that deeper spring of his nature which both Sally and Morven had made clear to him, he proved he was no killer by rushing from the cave. He could not even strike a man who was sitting down, and whose only weapons were remorseless facts.

Blindly, he stumbled through the snow, getting his direction by the contact of his shoulder with that cliff. Morven had not left him a shred of his pride, not a rag of his self-esteem. Not until he had stumbled into a few drifts, slipped on boulders treacherous with fresh snow, and

leaped away from gravel slides starting cataracts of stones below him, did he see the issue clearly.

He was engaged in a triangular duel with Morven and the mountains, and his prime need now was physical survival.

IT was near dark when Roddy rode down the highway. He had found the horses restless, but still tethered to the trees. The beasts had huddled close for warmth. They were just below the edge of the storm, and the pines gave them some shelter. It was bitterly cold, and Roddy would have taken the other horse, too, but he had to leave one, in case Morven should make that boasted attempt of his and reach it. Once in the saddle and riding homeward, Roddy began to see how that bet had been born of the storms of hate that had been gathering between him and Morven. Morven wanted to drive him out of the valley—that was plain. Morven wanted to kill him, just as much as he wanted to kill Morven, but neither had the nerve; the days of the quick fist and the quicker trigger were gone. Morven did not think Roddy could make his way down the mountains, and undoubtedly was wishing he would perish; so Roddy believed, for, seeing only the romance of the old raw red days, though never a killer himself, he could only think in a killer's terms.

Well, Roddy had come through, and now it was Morven's play. Could he make his way with that sprained ankle? Clearly, that was impossible. Could he last out the night? That was dubious. It would be hard for an open-air man like Roddy to survive that cold, let alone an overfed, soft-muscled, weak-hearted man like Buck. Roddy had seen younger and stronger men than Buck collapse after such exertion in high altitudes. Roddy was not sure that Buck's raving over his find, the wild project of melting away glaciers for a possible lode, was not mere mountain dizziness, a mental collapse preluding a physical one. Only mountain men could breathe that cocktail air of ten thousand feet up; that bet was on a par with mining the glacier. Roddy felt the mountains were on his side.

Every hundred feet he descended,

astride the warm body of the horse, his pulse became steadier. The trot across the plain to his homestead, bringing into his view the flares from the smelters, only hardened him further. That night in the snows would be a lesson to Morven not to brag. Now Roddy did not wish him dead; he only hoped that Morven might come close enough to a cold finish to realize that his millions meant nothing when the mountains held him up with their blizzards. His heart leaped as he saw little lines of fires among his trees. Billy had lit the smudges, those kerosene flares that would prevent the cold from blighting his buds. They did more than that; they thawed Roddy. There was his home; there was his life, growing things, with a wife and kids, and satisfied to make enough to get by. To the devil with Morven, his mines and his millions, Roddy concluded, as he hastened his pony.

CHAPTER V.

A FAMILY MAN.

AS he rode the horse into the stable, Sally opened the back door and called to him.

"That you, Roddy?"

"Sure."

The care in her soft voice was worth more than all the jingle of Morven's gold. Let Morven want Sally; after all, who would not? She still looked young and slender; she was mountain bred. She could still do a gallop and leap her fences; none of the flash-spending, dance-seeking woman of the East about Sally.

All the same, he resolved not to tell Sally of Buck's bet, of his leaving Buck up in that cave. Sally, no matter how loving a helpmate, was still that uncertain creature called woman. She, too, at times, had crazy moods that somehow worked right. He went into the house with a hasty explanation that he had been up the mountains with Morven, and checked further questions by a hearty call for supper. Sally, though curious about Roddy's torn clothes and scratched face, refrained from asking questions, and returned to her kitchen.

"Did you find the place, Pop?" asked Billy, however.

"Yes. Nothing to it, son," said Roddy, hanging up his coat.

Billy would not be so easy to check.

"Billy has been buying radio sets and airplanes all day long, Roddy," called Sally, from the kitchen. "He's been telling everybody you were going to find a mine richer than Buck's."

"What's the thermometer say, son?" demanded Roddy.

Billy could not answer, so Roddy ordered him outside to investigate, thus getting a moment's respite. Roddy had said nothing to Billy of his project of going prospecting with Morven; he was discovering now that Billy had an imagination something like Buck's.

"Whose pony was that, Roddy?" asked Sally, coming in.

"Buck's. I'll take it over after supper."

"Didn't throw you, did he? You're all muddled," she said anxiously.

"No. I slipped on some rocks. We got caught in a storm up in the snows. It certainly was rough going for a while up there."

Sally looked relieved, and laughed a little.

"I was afraid you and Buck had clinched."

"Oh, tush; Buck ain't a fighter no more."

Billy returned with the information that the thermometer registered thirty away from the trees, and forty between the smudges.

Roddy began figuring; it might drop lower toward morning, but his buds were safe. Then he considered that freezing in the valley meant probably down to zero among the peaks. He reached for a slice of ham, cooked in sugar and milk, Virginia style, and thought of Morven. That dish, one of Sally's choicest, did not taste as good as usual.

The family ate silently; they had been trained to recognize that food was precious; only those who have never hungered chatter at every bite. Billy ate like a young wolf, intent and absorbed; Buster was the first to break the silence. The youngster cried for something, and reached out toward the sideboard. Sally put a little toy beside him, a German-

carved wooden sheep. Roddy asked where it came from.

"Bevins sent it," said Sally, "when Billy called for the tire. Nice of him, wasn't it?"

RODDY nodded glumly; Billy, of course, had carried his gaudy visions to Bevins. The rumor would go round that he and Buck had made up, and perhaps were to be partners. Perhaps Sally was hoping for this; perhaps that was why she was so cheerful.

Billy, the irrepressible, after the coffee began a cross-examination; and Roddy realized the family man's difficulty of keeping a secret. Billy wanted to know more about that day's excursion; though how he had found out that his father had gone riding with Morven, Roddy could only surmise. Did Pop discover a new lode? Was Pop sure he had found the right place?

Morven's gold, Morven's lust for discovery, gleamed in Billy's eyes. Roddy tried his best not to be impatient; he was learning that a family man with a secret cannot sit with equanimity before his wife and his prattling children.

"Don't worry your father, Billy; he's had a hard day, and he's tired out," said Sally, divining Roddy's uneasiness.

"Ain't tired," barked Roddy genially. "I did find your place, Billy; but it's nothing—only a few scraps. Morven says—says the same."

It is difficult for a well-dined man to lie before a wife who knows him through and through. Roddy was very clumsy. In another second he would have blurted out what Morven did really say, the whole of that fantastic project of sluicing away the glacier. This would have led to the bet and Morven's cold vigil in the mountains. Roddy clenched his jaw, and rose to get his pipe.

"Where are my specimens, Pop?" asked Billy.

"Eh? Oh, in my coat pocket, in the kitchen."

Sally went out into the kitchen to fumble in Roddy's coat.

"Why, the pocket's sopping wet!" called Sally.

She returned, took Buster into the bed-

room, bade Billy go to his bed, and, after the children were gone and she had shut the door on them, approached Roddy, with a moist piece of paper in her hand.

"What does this mean, Roddy? Have you—killed Buck?" she asked, in a whisper.

She was like a block of marble—as white, as steady; but her eyes were like needles. In her hand she held the paper signed by Morven, giving the terms of his bet with Roddy.

"Why, of course not."

"You're always talking about it. Then, what does this mean? What's this about me?"

It did not take Sally a minute to make Roddy tell all that had happened.

"Of course, the bet is all nonsense," he tried to explain. "I mean about you and the mine."

"But you left him alone, out there in the snow on a night like this. You sent nobody to find him."

"I was mad. He said he loved you."

"What if he does? Why shouldn't he? Is that any reason for you to leave a crippled man in the snow? Would you put a cat out on a night like this? You get his men and bring him back right away."

"Ain't going to," said Roddy obstinately.

"Very well, then; I will. Yes, I will, because I love him, too. How dare you bet about me? Am I a mere chip in a poker game? Haven't I a word to say? I'm a free woman, Roddy Crawford, and I'm tired of being a wife and a mother and a cook and a housemaid, so that you can have your pipe dreams under your trees that don't grow. I'm free; I'm going to Buck."

THE actress that is in every woman permitted Sally to shoot her barbed words with calculated emotion; she was angry with Roddy, but not so frantically as she appeared; she lashed him, but with directed blows; she appeared beyond herself, but she did not tear her coat from the hook, nor did she raise her voice sufficiently to disturb her sleeping children.

Roddy stared, as if stricken; his house

was falling around him; this white-faced, whispering fury could not be his Sally.

"Buck *does* things," she continued. "If he wants me, he can have me."

She had put on her boots and tied on her hood, when a loud and peremptory knock was heard on the front door. Roddy opened it. Maginnis, more than usually ugly, strode unceremoniously into the house, followed by Frank and some others.

"Where's the boss, Crawford?" demanded Maginnis.

"His horse has just come back; he'd cast his bridle. Where is he?" added Frank, through his teeth.

Roddy Crawford, driven to the wall by the loss of his wife's affections, by her bitter contempt for him, found that strength in desperation which comes to a man when he touches rock bottom. Sally had said nothing; evidently she was not going to betray him. He gave one quick look at her; there was a light in her face, as if she were expecting something—something that he would do by himself, without her prompting.

Vaguely, out of the many memories that bound them together, the rather set, slow-witted Roddy began to understand Sally was leaving it to him, demanding the enterprise of him he had lacked. Sally despised him—that was certain; Sally liked fighters. Well, he would fight.

Maginnis, who had not missed Roddy's glance at Sally, repeated his question.

"How do I know?" replied Roddy. "What business is it of yours?"

"We're hired to look after him and his property, mister," put in Frank nastily.

"You dicks round here have been talking rough stuff," echoed Maginnis. "The boss told us how you tried to blow him up once. That don't go no more. We're going to hold yer for the sheriff. Lift yer flippers."

Roddy found himself looking into the barrel of a .32 held by Maginnis, and slowly raised his hands.

"You can do yer explaining to the sheriff," continued Maginnis, "while we go after Morven's body. Frisk him and the dame, Frank."

Frank had also drawn a gun and was covering Sally.

"You leave my wife alone," said Roddy. "And there isn't a gun in the house, except a shotgun, and we're out of shells."

Roddy gritted his teeth at seeing Sally compelled to lift her hands and undergo the indignity of having her pockets pawed by Frank. Roddy, a former cowman, raised on romantic tales of the old days true enough to their time, but false to to-day, was learning a finer sort of fighting. That gun barrel held him immovable, but did not stop his thinking. His mind raced rapidly over all the possibilities.

If Morven had perished, a charge of murder would certainly be made against him, and could, very likely, be substantiated. Morven had suffered from that climb; if Morven's body was found, it would be as much bruised and battered as he, Roddy, had been from that scramble over the ridge. Lawyers, he concluded from his bitter experience of lawyers, could easily draw a circumstantial picture of Roddy striking Morven down and leaving him in the cave. The old suspicions of his having been concerned in that dynamiting would be revived; the mining men, all siding with Morven, could easily pack a jury to convict him. The outlook was black for him.

Frank was carefully searching the big pockets of Sally's riding coat, when he turned like a startled cat at a slight sound on the other side of the closed door of the bedroom. Holding himself flat against the wall, with a deft display of sinister skill, he turned the knob with one hand and flung the door open, leveling the gun into the dark opening. Billy, very pale and flustered, in his pajamas, stood in the doorway, holding out his pea rifle.

"I got my gun, Pop," he said.

SALLY'S composure was lost in a stifled scream; but Maginnis prevented her moving, while Frank quickly threw up the barrel of the boy's rifle, and secured possession of that small, but certainly lethal weapon.

"No gun, eh?" he sneered.

"That's only a toy, and he's a child!" exclaimed Sally.

"I've seen kids bring down cops with them gats, missus," said Frank. "The Socola gang——"

"Shut up, Frank," growled Maginnis. "We got 'em all rounded up now. Regular family o' wild cats. Outside, all o' yer. We'll hold 'em in the engine house, and phone the sheriff."

"Won't I be enough?" demanded Roddy hotly. "You can't take her. There's another child in there—a mere baby."

Sally, however, now lost all her restraint, at seeing her son roughly dragged by the collar.

"You don't have to take anybody!" she cried. "Buck Morven is——"

"That'll do, Sally," called Roddy, not wishing her to save him; he wanted to fight this out alone.

"You let her spill it, mister," said Maginnis.

"Morven is up in a cave," continued Sally, "on the ridge, this side of Blue Lake. He and my husband made a foolish bet that Morven could not stay the night out. You'll find him in the cave with a fire burning. He's quite safe."

Maginnis grinned; the other men laughed loudly and coarsely.

"Say, missus," jeered Frank, "that's the weakest alibi I ever heard pulled. You'll have to frame up something better than that."

"It's the truth!" cried Roddy.

"Is it? Well, don't drop yer mitts. Will yer lead us to this cave?" demanded Frank incredulously.

"I'll see the whole gang of you plumb to hell first! You think I've murdered him, don't you?"

"Yes," replied Frank and Maginnis.

"That I took him on a prospecting trip and did him in?"

"Yes."

"Well, prove your case. But you can't make me help you to prove it. You can't make me go after him. You can't drive me with bullets to find him. That would be murder. Why, you're not even sworn-in members of a posse. You're only hired thugs Morven brought from the East. You don't want to get in wrong with the law. I'll bet you've all got records you're trying to get outlawed. My

wife and my boy are not in on this. Leave them alone. I'll go with you to the sheriff; but they won't. Now shoot, if you have the nerve, because I'm going to drop my hands; it's kinder tiresome holding them up."

Roddy dropped his hands and no guns were fired; the thugs merely fell back a step.

"Come on and produce your sheriff," said Roddy, pushing through the door and through the group gathered round it. None of them lifted a hand. Maginnis followed Roddy, protesting against Frank's caution, for Frank had restrained him from further violence; Roddy's reference to their records had been more potent than a gun.

All that the men did was to form a group round Roddy; some of the men were on foot; three were on horseback, Frank and Maginnis now, among the latter.

"Bring him along, Mac," said Frank. "I'll go ahead and get the sheriff on the phone. If he wants law he can have it."

Frank galloped off, and the procession started. It was naturally a slow one, for it had to keep pace with Roddy on foot.

Roddy had noticed that Maginnis could not ride, and that he also had difficulty with the reins held by a hand that carried a gun. This was the mere automatic observation of a man bred in the saddle, of a man who, years before, at least, could gallop with the reins in his teeth, taking pot shots at fences from guns in both hands. Roddy's main thoughts, however, were on Sally. What was she thinking of him? What kind of man did he now appear to her, thus led off unresisting like a confessed criminal. What should he do to regain her respect? Roddy was learning that winning a wife does not entitle to permanent possession.

He looked back and saw her standing in the doorway with Billy. What would Billy think of him? Was he ashamed of him, too? Roddy must act like a man for Billy's sake as much as for Sally's.

The cold night air smote him severely, after that feverish scene with Sally; his feet were kicking up the light snow which was still falling. It was probably falling much more heavily in the ranges; by this

time Morven was, most likely, snowed in. Roddy wondered if Morven would know enough to try and keep awake, or if he slept to maintain a smoke hole in the drifts. He hoped he would not sleep; the fire might go out while he dozed from exhaustion. In his anxiety about Morven he assumed him to be an absolute tenderfoot and utterly forgetful of the most elementary precautions.

The party turned round the side of the house and met the full flare from the smudges. The trees were seen to be covered with light snow blossoms that melted as they fell; the ground around the trunks was clear and wet; the heat of the smudges was doing its work. Roddy saw Maginnis shield his eyes from their glare.

Roddy looked back once more. Sally was buttoning up her coat. Roddy knew, by a flash of that intuitive sympathy which had now brought him closer to his wife than had all their years of marriage, that Sally was going to mount that horse he had left in the stable, and ride off to do what she could for Morven.

Roddy stooped and, with a swift jerk of his hand under Maginnis' right stirrup, tossed the fellow from his saddle. Maginnis, as he expected, did not know enough to keep hold of his reins, and fell on his head. Before the half-stunned man could rise, before the men behind could see what had happened, Roddy had leaped into the saddle and was galloping up the road, bending low to escape the fusillade of tardy and badly aimed bullets that followed him. Roddy was going to get Morven himself; it was his only way to make good with Sally.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KILLERS.

RODDY galloped up the road, his thoughts racing faster than the pounding of his horse's hoofs. Maginnis and his men would certainly follow him; those that had not horses would soon get them. Frank would be apprised of the escape; they would certainly summon the assistance of his cunning brains. Whatever restraints they had put upon themselves would be dissipated in the fury

of a man hunt. They all believed he had made away with Morven; that belief would justify their bullets, and his flight would be interpreted as a confession of guilt.

He reined in to listen as he reached the rise where Bandy's trail turned off to the ridge; he tried to still his heart, to silence his pounding temples to the calm of the night. The snow was thinning out. The stars were appearing, and their radiance brought out the ghostly glimmers of the lofty snows. Far down the valley he could see the faint light of his smudges. But he heard no sound of pursuing hoofs; there should have been a little, despite the muting of the snow; he heard nothing but the pouring of the creeks, the little avalanches of overlaid branches, the soft stir of the dying wind in the trees.

He would have liked to disguise the spot where he turned off, but there was no time for such fine points. All he could do was to force the horse off the road some yards higher up, and burst through the brush till he hit the trail.

His pursuers were town men, and perhaps this would at least confuse them; on the other hand, Roddy was too careful to underestimate their intelligence—at any rate, the intelligence of that stealthy Frank. He listened again. He was gaining a little time, for he heard nothing. But they would certainly follow him, even if they seemed rather slow about it.

When he reached the trail, now thick and smooth with the soft snow on the winter grass and dead pine needles, he drove his mount with blind, reckless speed along that narrow and almost invisible trail. His night eyes of his old cattle days were still even better than his daylight vision. That faint gray trail ahead seemed to stop suddenly at a black cluster of pine stems; he knew that meant a turn, however; and the horse found the turn. Something dark swooped down on him just above the horse's ears. Roddy ducked his head as the needles of the branch that had threatened to sweep him from the saddle pricked his face.

Out of the nervous excitement of a hunted man, he guessed with certainty at the spot where he and Buck had turned

up the ridge to the snows. He reined in, and listened with straining ears. Still he heard no sounds of galloping hoofs in that night locked still in the cold. He dismounted; this was the place; he could see footprints and broken twigs, where Morven had burst through the brush—a heel mark here, a torn branch there, not quite hidden by the snow. He pushed into the pines, he trying to recognize the branch to which the horses had been fastened. Then he found the bridle which the horse he had left behind had backed out of. He had been right; he had come unerringly to the spot. He had to be absolutely sure of this before he started to climb, because the way he had descended in that blinding scatter of snow was not at all clear to his memory. He would make the ascent to the ridge from here, get what direction he could from the lay of the hills now clear in the starlight, and then work back. Up to the finding of the cave, he could easily map his movements; after that, he had just blindly dropped, almost fallen down the ridge.

He pushed out through the pines, after fastening his horse far in among the brush, so that his pursuers could not easily find it. The face of the ridge, up which the two men had so painfully climbed that morning, was entirely transformed. In the glittering starlight, which in spots was actually reflected as if from frosted mirrors, the boulders stood out in white, smooth bosses; the few junipers, sparse brushes, and last, lone pines had lost all character and were unrecognizable; the almost vertical faces of cliffs they had crawled up stood out in dark masses, like holes in that wide coverlet of snow the storm had spread over the ridge.

As he looked up, trying to seek out some way of scaling those heights, he saw a large, yellow star gleam far away to the right. The star changed to red, faded, and blazed again. It could not be a star, for that ridge was backed by range after range of snow peaks; no star could be seen from where he was, at so low an angle; those invisible ranges would hide it. That star must be the blaze of Buck's fire.

Roddy was about to push ahead, and take his chance on a rough-and-tumble scramble up those snow-covered rocks, when he heard something behind him. He stood motionless, with every sense straining.

Had Maginnis and Frank stolen upon him? Had fresh and heavier snow fallen in the valley below and muffled their horses' hoofs? He listened, with his nerves drawn out to tight wires. He had no weapon; he could not even risk breaking off a stick, or stooping to pick up a heavy stone. His best chance was to keep still, waiting till they passed by, or, if they approached, to leap suddenly and secure one of their guns. Roddy had no qualms now; he was a cornered man, and would shoot to kill if need be. He had no choice.

He heard that sound again; it was merely the pony tugging at its bridle, causing the pine she was tied to shiver and precipitate the loose snow from its topmost branches. The snow, falling among the lower branches, resembled the sound of men whispering.

Roddy, relieved, was about to go back, but he decided he had better tie that horse still farther back among the pines. Then, out of the still night, came a faint but indubitable drumming. The valleys were filled with thin echoes; Roddy thought he could hear voices, raucous shouts and cries. No Western men would trail a supposed murderer with that clamor.

He took extra confidence from their clumsiness, and determined to risk some precious minutes to bewilder them further. Those hoofs he had heard must be still on the highway; the voices were probably the contradictory conclusions of a green mob, trying to pick up his trail. When they did find it, they would certainly not gallop along that narrow, winding trail as he had; he figured he had ample time for his trick.

He untied the pony, brought it out on the trail, headed it toward Blue Lake, and gave it a slap on the haunches to start it galloping. The men would follow its trail, and thus Roddy would have this side of the ridge free of his hunters. This was necessary, for it was going to

be a long climb up the snows, and if he were sighted they would certainly take pot shots at him. His only chance of making them drop their guns was to appear side by side with Buck.

But that pony had a will of its own, or misinterpreted the slapping. It backed away into the brush, and would have started down the trail to join those other horses that were perhaps talking to him of warm stables and full feed bags, through their distance-annihilating senses and instincts. Roddy was just able to catch at the rein, and hold the animal from this betrayal of his purpose.

He then mounted, and rode the pony up the hill to where the trail dipped suddenly to the valley beyond. This was the way Morven had wanted to take; it led to the far side of Blue Lake. Once over the rise, he dismounted, headed the pony down the hill and gave it another slap, this time with a stick which he picked out of the brush. The pony started off at a gallop that soon dropped to a canter. Roddy listened; it kept on cantering because the road was downhill.

Having succeeded in this piece of strategy because he had read the mind of a horse, Roddy returned, but keeping close under the pines so that his human footprints might not be seen among the hoofmarks of the pony. He had to jump ahead of the keen minds of his chasers also.

As he reached the spot where he had decided to climb the ridge, he saw a faint, intermittent glow appearing away down the trail, bringing out the dark trunks of the trees, and moving enormous shadows. His pursuers were closing on him; their voices were very low, and they were carrying searchlights. They would have discovered by now those retraced footprints. Again he pushed through the brambles, and prepared to climb. He could see better now; the distant hills were outlining themselves in the first dim graying of the dawn. The snow spread above him, soft and immaculate. He would have to flounder through great drifts, claw with hands and feet over rocks whose edges were deceptive; he would certainly create a terrifically obvious trail up that ridge. He paused—for one of

those eternal seconds which try men's souls and determine the fate of their bodies.

HE saw the lights coming closer; he could make out Maginnis and Frank flooding the trail with glowing circles of light from their torches. Suddenly they stopped, and began arguing.

"He's got off here," said Maginnis.

"Look around, boys," said Frank, "and shoot on sight. We've got the right, now the sheriff's sworn us in over the phone."

Roddy shivered a little. So that was what had delayed them, and why Frank had ridden ahead to the mine; they had not only got fresh men all mounted and flash lights, but had also taken care to get an authorization from the sheriff, which would justify all they might do.

Roddy had been right not to underestimate Frank's intelligence; he would take no chances on their callous brutality. They were out on a man hunt, and whatever they did would be covered by a specious legality; they were licensed to kill. Even if Morven were found alive after they had shot Roddy, they would escape punishment.

Roddy knew now that his mere emergence from the bushes would be followed by a rain of bullets; he would not be given time to explain that Morven was up yonder, sitting by a fire in a cave. These men were killers, and their bullets would carry faster than his words. In a few seconds, those narrowing circles of light, opening and converging like eyes of evil purpose, would trace him. He thought hard; he grew hot as he saw that nothing but a desperate endeavor would save him.

He always maintained that it was Billy who saved him; and, in a sense, it was. Billy had brought him to this pass; but the mountains, and Sally, also, did their share in reviving the spirit of his youth, of his reckless early manhood. It was a case of uniting a man's courage and knowledge with a boy's love of hide and seek. From where he stood, he took a long, standing leap into the deepest-looking snowdrift before him. It was a good leap; Roddy's knees were supple enough to carry him ten clear feet. He landed

in the snow and sank to a sitting position. The bushes he had emerged from had rustled a little. His heart was pounding, his breath whistled through his teeth; his landing in the snow and the striking of his feet on the gravel below had seemed clamorous to him. Slowly he turned round and faced his enemies.

But his leap had not been heard; the men were still searching the bushes and examining the road. Peering from under his hat with half-shut eyes, lest the searchlight should sparkle on them, Roddy saw Frank emerge from the bushes toward the ridge. Frank swept his searchlight out over the smooth, untrodden snow that Roddy had cleared with his desperate leap. For a fraction of a second the light passed over Roddy's face, over his still body; but that earth-stained hat and coat was to Frank only another patch in the ridge, some obtruding rock, some half-covered boulder. That ten feet of untrodden snow, smooth as the storm had laid it, short-circuited Frank from keener observation.

"Didn't go this way, Mac," he called, returning to his party.

Roddy was saved. But he was as yet not free to go after Buck, for the men were still there, beating the bushes on the other side of the trail. He could hear them calling to each other up the opposite range and far down the gullies. The cold began to penetrate his clothes, the snow was settling in on him; and if he did not stir soon, he would freeze. He had always believed it was warm under the snow; he had seen sheep, cattle, and men survive under snowdrifts. But Roddy had been racing for his life; that chill was striking into the body of a man wet with perspiration from straining beyond himself. The mountains were putting him to their ordeal; the most real, the most intense fight of Roddy's life was this endurance of this besieging cold.

"Say, this is a frame-up," he heard Frank cry loudly. "He's mounted again and ridden on."

FRANK'S shout brought the men out of the bushes, and Roddy saw them group as Frank explained his deductions. Crawford had dismounted and made foot-

prints all around to confuse his pursuers, to gain time; plainly Crawford was making north to escape over the State line into Canada. Frank even discovered the cast-off bridle on the bough.

"You're *some* dick, all right," remarked Maginnis.

"First time I ever played this side of the game, boys," chuckled Frank. "I rather like it. Come on; let's get him. He's a foxy guy." Frank's laugh was below the zero of the blizzard.

The men mounted and rode off, but still Roddy did not stir, for they were yet too near him.

Suddenly Frank spoke again, but with a lowered voice:

"Douse your lights, boys. I hear a horse."

The lights went out; Roddy heard safety catches released from revolvers, and a horse cantering slowly. He recognized the canter; Roddy had ridden that pony too strenuously to forget the rhythm of its action. In a few seconds Maginnis and Frank were turning their lights on the pony Roddy had escaped with; but its saddle was empty.

But that riderless pony was enough to start them galloping up the trail. Frank concluded that Roddy had either been thrown, swept from his saddle by an overhanging bough, or had dismounted to strike on foot through the lower woods. Arguing a hundred conjectures, they rode off; and Roddy was free to lift himself out of the snow and restore his circulation.

He was frozen to the bone; the snow had melted in his clothes and stolen his bodily warmth. Soon those moist garments would soon freeze on him, and he would have to make that climb, clad in ice. He recalled something from the old days, when he and Buck had gone after lost cattle in such blizzards. But there were no old rags of food bags, no warming newspapers round here. But perhaps dry pine needles would do as well. Digging under the hard surface beneath the pine trees, he came upon masses of pine needles, sufficiently dry for his purpose; these he stuffed under his coat, between his trousers and his underwear, till his clothes were bulging. The pine needles

were cold, slightly moist, but they kept that frozen cloth away from his limbs; they were ample armor against the cold.

Roddy judged, from the speed with which the pony had galloped away from him when he had stampeded it, that it must have gone at least a mile before turning back. That would have brought it to the farther bank of Blue Lake. His pursuers would halt at where the pony turned; they would be held up by a further bewildered search thinking, probably, that he had waded away through the shallow waters of the creek. He felt safe from them for at least an hour.

He boldly began the ascent of the ridge toward that intermittent glimmer of light so faint that his hunters, blinded by their searchlights, had not seen it. It was nearer daylight when he reached the summit of the ridge; the ghostly glare, reflected from the snow peaks catching the first white rays of the dawn, made his way more easy. Also, the snow was thinner on the summit, for the wind had blown it bare, piling it into the hollows below. Familiar rocks, boulders and outlines helped him. He could vaguely make out the long, white sweep of the glacier, but the fire was now hidden from him; it was round a corner of the ridge.

In a few moments he came to the wall he had fingered his way along when he had found the cave. He saw he was on a ledge that dipped away to the right and he clung to that wall for guidance. Again he saw the fire. He hurried up; the mouth of the cave opened before him; he called to Buck as he leaped through the smoke. The cave was empty.

AMAZED, he looked around among the shadows; he explored the shelves of rock, wondering if Buck had tucked himself away to sleep somewhere. He found no trace of Buck, no sign to tell what had become of him. The ax was there, and some chips. Buck had evidently cut up his firewood; there was still much of it there. He had seemingly prepared to stay the night—yet he was gone.

That a man with a twisted ankle should have risked hopping about painfully amid those treacherous rocks and burying snows, seemed incredible. Roddy was

overcome for a moment with a presage of disaster. To fight this fear he was forced to indulge in the most incredible of surmises. Could Sally have reached here before him and helped Morven away? She could not have done so without Billy's assistance; Billy was smart enough to think out even a quicker way to the cave than this.

He came out of the cave. The peaks were now glowing with the gold of the coming day; away east he could even make out the outlines of the hills encompassing Peaceful Valley. Color was coming back into the dark canyons, and the snows behind him were pink in the light and royal purple in their shadows; he could recognize familiar red-and-orange buttes below the snow line.

But he was also made startlingly aware how luck had been with him and Morven the night before. By hugging that cliff, the two had been saved from a hundred-foot drop over a ledge. He did not dare to approach the edge of that drop to see if Buck had fallen over, for the snow was too crumbling though it was smooth. There was no sign of a man having slipped over, though it was possible that fresh snow might have fallen and hidden any such traces.

Then he heard the sharp ring of shots, revolver shots, and realized that, now the day had come, he would be an open mark for his hunters. The shots were too far away for them to be firing at him, however; but at any moment he might be sighted against the snow, with no weapon to defend himself, no Buck to prove his innocence, and facing the fatal prospect that Buck was lying somewhere, lost in the drifts.

He had learned to know Buck better now. He saw that Buck could not sit tamely in that cave by himself; Buck would try to get away. He read his former bunkie by himself; at bottom both were of the same breed—men of the plains and the ranges, who found it impossible merely to endure, who took all their difficulties fighting. Yes, Buck could not sit it out; he would win the bet by making his way back himself. That bet, in the light of the morning, appeared as trivial to Roddy now as it had to Sally;

she had been angered because he had made her a mere chip in a game. Otherwise, she had not taken that bet seriously. But what had become of Buck was not trivial.

Roddy went back to the opening of the cave, and then saw footprints leading away along the ledge in the opposite direction from which he had approached it. The footprints were a man's; there were none of a woman's or a child's. Sally and Billy had not been here. Then he noted that the prints were all of a right foot, one a few inches after the other. Buck must have got away by hopping, by clinging to the rock to save his bad foot, perhaps, at times, by crawling on his hands and knees.

The audacity, the nerve of this escape took away Roddy's breath. Minutely, he examined those single footprints, and then saw a small circular depression in the snow on each side of them. How Buck had got away was now plain. That indomitable miner, not to be beaten, must have cut himself sticks, perhaps crutches, and had attempted, or, perhaps, was still attempting to get down that snow-in-crusted mass of rocks on three legs.

"Bully for you, buddie!" cried Roddy, in admiration. "Hey there, Buckie, Buckie!"

Roddy's voice, big with joy and enthusiasm, rolled out in the clear air of the canyons and reverberated with their tossing echoes. All he thought of now was catching up with him, helping him, carrying him on his back, if need be, all the way home.

SALLY was right; Morven was their kind of man. Roddy forgot those who were chasing him; he forgot his exhaustion; he was lifted with exaltation as Morven's plucky attempt cleared from his soul all that load of envy which had for so long kept them antagonists.

"Hey, there! Buckie!" he called, as he advanced along the ledge.

In a few moments the sun would be blazing above the eastern hills. Roddy was hot and panting; he opened his coat, forgetting how it was stuffed with pine needles; he tore out a few handfuls from around his chest for relief, not stopping

to do more. Pausing to listen for a reply to his calls, he heard no further shots, but instead, a slow and increasing trickle down the face of the cliff. The snows above were melting; they were disappearing under his feet. The air he was breathing was unnaturally warm; the heat that was creating that flow of waters came from the air, not from the rising sun. The snows were not melting from the dawn alone; a chinook was coming, that sudden and mysteriously hot wind from the west which has its legendary source in China, a wind that sometimes lifts the snows without taking time to melt them, sometimes converts them into tons of water that swell the creeks, and turns the hills into impassable, treacherous slides of mud.

Thoroughly alarmed, Roddy hurried along the ledge, calling loudly for Buck. He was rained on by sluicing waters that poured down from the rocks above and converted the cliff into a waterfall. He had to hold fast for a foothold in the mush running under his feet. Buck's traces were completely effaced. The ledge then wound round the mouth of the ravine, and he emerged onto a long slope of hillside, a white incline of unmelted snow, too thick to have been thawed immediately.

He heard a hail from below. A hundred yards down he saw a man struggling through the snow; it was Morven, who was shouting to him and waving a stick. Buck's other arm was supported on a crutch. Roddy waved his hat; it was more than a warning; it was a ceremonious acknowledgment, a tribute of respect, recalled from those days when the two men had ridden into Mexico to purchase silver-mounted saddles, a Spanish gesture. Buck rested himself on one crutch while backed against a rock, and waved his hat with the same large sweep; these hidalgos of the hills were saluting each other.

But Roddy had a wider view of Buck's predicament. Buck should have kept higher up where the snows were thinner; he was too low under those piled-up snows above him, too close to the edge of that ravine and that turn below, just showing the tops of the pines a hundred below. Roddy signaled to him to work up

higher; but that fool Buck continued bowing and scraping in the snow, thoroughly appreciating Roddy's tribute to their revived friendship. Then Roddy saw above Buck a great blob of snow detach itself from a rock and begin sliding down the slope.

CHAPTER VII.

RODDY KILLS.

AS fast as he could make his way across that rough hillside, Roddy rushed to help Buck; he was within a few feet of him when that avalanche above, a gathering mass of half-melted snow, more like water than snow, overwhelmed the two men with a viscid torrent, and swept them down the hill.

"I'm all right, Rowdy."

"The hell you are! Hold on to me."

Buck resisted being helped; the bet was that he was to get home unaided. Roddy had to fight to hold him, besides having to face the difficulty of keeping his own feet and holding his head above wave after wave of snow that kept pouring from above.

Backing his hardest against the snow, yet gradually sliding lower, Roddy could see they were dangerously near the edge of the ravine; the pine tops below were drawing closer; in a second the two would be carried over that fatal drop. Then, to his left, he saw the blackened stump of a lightning-smitten pine, showing its fork above the snow. Trusting its roots still held among the rocks on the edge, he sidled toward it, and just managed to throw one arm round it, while, with the other, he held onto Buck. The snow poured over them, down the ravine.

Luckily, the pine held. The avalanche rested in a great bank piled up behind them. The two men were safe, though almost suspended over a vertical drop of one hundred feet. They crawled back to the ledge, where Roddy kicked away enough snow to give them a safe grip on the rock. The snows above were now thinned, and, though still melting, did not possess so much mass that it might threaten to overwhelm them again. So Roddy judged, as he stood up; he also decided he would have to go and get help

for Buck. Buck's crutches had been carried away, and he still stubbornly refused to be helped by Roddy. Buck sat on the rock, trying out his bad ankle, and swearing at Roddy for interfering with his lone trip home. He declared that he and his crutches could have withstood that avalanche.

Suddenly a long sliver of bark was torn off the pine that had saved them; they heard the whine of a bullet, and, a second later, the gun that had fired it. Maginnis, Frank, and their party had come across the ridge from Blue Lake, and had trailed them by the remains of their fire and their food cans. They had been aided by Roddy's shouts, and were now advancing along the ridge, blazing at Roddy. Roddy could see them taking cover in the mouth of the cave; for all they knew, Roddy might since have secured arms, and they were taking no chances.

Roddy himself took cover behind the pine stump with Buck, and quickly told him what had happened.

"Aw, shucks! Those fellows can't hit a house," said Buck contemptuously. "They're only city gunmen. Funny, Rowdy; you can't get gunmen anywhere else these days. And they won't carry anything but .32s. They're only back-alley marksmen."

Roddy remembered what Billy had said about their marksmanship, and felt reassured; but all the same, those bullets were whistling unpleasantly near. He stood up again, lifting his arms above his head, and shouting to them to desist. A fresh fusillade followed, buzzing viciously over their heads and hissing in little holes in the snow banks.

"You damn fools, can't you see I'm alive?" cried Buck, as he arose on his one good foot and clinging to Roddy for support. "You're fired, all of you!"

Buck slipped and, in trying to save himself, rested on his bad ankle; he cursed with pain and grappled with Roddy. More bullets followed; for the men firing at them, seeing what appeared to be a struggle, hearing the shouts and not the words, naturally surmised that a fight was in progress. They were vainly trying to pick off Roddy.

"Lie flat, man, and I'll draw their fire," cried Roddy, as he dragged Buck behind the pine.

The firing ceased as for a moment the two men were hidden. Roddy with his eyes measured the depths below; the perpendicular cliff ended in a pile of rubble, hard bone-breaking stones emerging from the melting snows; there were no deep soft drifts here to break the fall of a high jump. The rubble ended in a cluster of soft young pines; their waving tops, flecked with snow, looked like a soft carpet. He might be able to reach them; true, he might be impaled on their branches, but then he remembered he was padded all over with a stuffing of pine needles. He took his chance. He rose to his feet at the extreme end of the overhanging withered pine, and jumped.

He landed, luckily, feet down on a long branch that sagged elastically, and this eased the momentum of his fall. He was dropped to the lower branches; he clutched at the rough bark that tore out the lining of his hands; his face was scored, but he slipped to the ground, dazed but safe.

"Put 'em up, Rowdy!" cried a voice.

Roddy found he was surrounded by the sheriff's posse; if he was not a sanguinary murderer caught red-handed, he looked it—tumbling out on the road, followed by that fusillade of shots which rang from above. Bailey and his men had ample grounds for their judgment.

"Where did you leave Morven?" demanded Bailey.

Still out of breath from that parachuting into the pines, that tumble from branch to branch, Roddy incoherently told of what had happened, and declared that Morven was alive and probably safe. Bailey listened, unconvinced, but as Roddy was unarmed and showed no desire to escape, the sheriff could afford to be judicial.

Fresh shots broke out over their heads, and the valley rang with the echoes. These shots called for an explanation. Roddy thought that, having seen him jump into the pines, the men were raking the trees with their fire to get him. Bailey ordered the posse to go round the hill and stop that unnecessary shooting. He and

Roddy came up from the road below the cliff. Stones kept falling from the cliff, chipped by the bullets; those men were not aiming at the pines, but higher up.

"They must be shooting at Morven!" exclaimed Roddy, perplexed. "Wonder if they did see me jump?"

Roddy gave further details to the sheriff of his plan to draw the men's fire.

"They must have seen me," he concluded. "I wonder if they think it was Morven who jumped and that I'm still up behind the pine."

The two men approached that incline of rubble which extended from the foot of the cliff and which Roddy had cleared; he pointed out to the sheriff the pine he had landed on, and the broken boughs whose springiness had eased his fall. Bailey was impressed, and Roddy's story began to ring true to him.

"If Morven is as mused up as you are, Roddy, it would explain their mistake, especially as the sun's in their eyes. Gee, it's hot here!"

The sheriff was hot, after his gallop. Roddy was stifling; he tore open his coat to let the air play on his chest, and the thick mat of pine needles fell out.

"Wonder if they think I killed Morven and threw the body into these pines?"

"Dunno," said the sheriff, curiously regarding those needles. "I was just wondering how you'd put on so much flesh. Just now you looked as fat as Morven, and you're both wearing the same kind of clothes. I bet they was thinking it was Buck did that jump to get away from you. They think they're plugging at you."

ANOTHER shot rang out, this time much closer overhead. Both men looked up. The old trunk that had been Roddy's jumping board stood out stark and black against the clear morning blue, and on it was a figure, painfully crawling to its farthest end. It was Morven, they knew, but unrecognizable at that distance and with the morning rays darting in their eyes; to them it appeared the same muddled, padded out, bundle of torn rags that Roddy would look like in the same position.

More shots followed, and to Roddy

there was character in their vicious intentness. Roddy's long strain in the snows, his sudden upheaval out of the ruts of his habits, brought him to this instinctive insight that it was the malevolent Frank who was shooting.

There was only one thing to do, and Roddy did it.

"Let me have your gun, Bob," he said quietly to Bailey.

"Dunno as I kin, Rowdy," said the sheriff, dubiously.

Roddy, aroused by more of those slowly aimed shots at Morven, landed, with his fist, a blow suddenly but carefully calculated for a knock-out on the sheriff's chin, and sent him senseless down among the rubble.

"Sorry, Bob," he said, as he picked the gun from the sheriff's limp fingers. The sheriff did not answer.

He then ran to the foot of the pine that had saved him, and quickly climbed the entangled ladder of its branches. When his head emerged from the foliage of its summit, he commanded a partial view of the ledge, along which Frank was now advancing, stooping for cover and taking more shots at the man on the dead pine.

Roddy, now free of all physical exhaustion, his brain a pitiless glacier of purpose, was for one moment the cool, calculating killer he had so often imagined himself to be. His foothold was uncertain as he lifted the gun, but when he fired, his aim was sure. Frank fell on his face; his arm hung over the ledge, and his .32 fell down from his hand. No other shots now rang through the ranges; the sheriff's men had caught up with Maginnis and the rest of them. Only Frank had ventured on that lone stalking.

But Roddy was not finished; he now lifted the gun at Morven, who was trying to get a foothold on the end of the pine trunk to imitate Roddy's leap. Roddy had read his purpose out of that new sense of brotherhood which had been recreated between him and Buck. That leap was what Billy would have done; Roddy had done it, and Buck had to try and do the same. Buck did not know that he was now safe, and he was going

to make an escape the same way as Roddy had.

"Buck! Go back!" shouted Roddy. "I've got Frank. Go back, or I'll plug you, too. Let me lick you in something, won't you?"

Then, after sighting at this man along the blue gun barrel, this man whom he had grown up with, who had been his rival in everything, whom he had thought he hated, Roddy threw the gun from him lest he might accidentally shoot. That dead man sprawling on the ledge above cleared forever from Roddy's mind all thoughts of killing.

"All right, Rowdy!" cried Morven, as Roddy almost fell once more to the ground.

Bailey, rubbing his chin, came toward him.

"I had to do it, Bob," gasped the now thoroughly nerve-relaxed Roddy. "Lock me up, or take a crack at my jaw if you like."

"Roddy," said the sheriff impressively, "it was the slickest thing I ever saw pulled. I couldn't have climbed that tree. I'd sure like to shake hands with yer, Roddy."

RODDY and Buck were riding their borrowed horses ahead of the sheriff and his men. They were arguing; the few words that floated back to Bob Bailey's ears puzzled that curious listener, for they were very emphatic, yet strangely polite and polished.

Both Buck and Roddy knew their long animosity was over, but these really overgrown boys were rather shy where their deeper feelings were concerned.

They reached the turn to the homestead; Roddy should go left and Buck continue on to his mine. Roddy coughed, and asked Buck to come over and have breakfast. Buck accepted.

"But I still claim that you win," continued Buck. "I had to have your help. That mine is yours."

Roddy assumed a judicial scowl, considering the matter.

"I think not," he answered. "You got away on your own, Buck. Those crutches entitle you to my orchard."

"I'm inclined to say," drawled Buck.

as if the stakes were a mere trifle, "that that jump of yours and that shooting award you my mine."

So they argued with a high serenity, with a careful regard for the abstract; but neither of them dared to mention the third term of the bet—Sally.

They approached the homestead; Billy had sighted them, and ran in to tell his mother.

She could hear them.

"I know when I'm licked, Buck Morven, and I pay my bets."

Then Buck's voice:

"So do I, Rowdy Crawford."

Sally came out hurriedly. Surely, the two were not quarreling again, she thought.

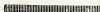
"Sally," said Buck, dismounting, "we can't decide who won our bet. Guess you'll have to decide."

"I won it," said Sally, kissing Roddy a little ostentatiously. Then, looking straight at Buck: "Are you two still arguing over that nonsense? Forget it; come in to breakfast."

Buck met the friendly challenge of her eyes, respecting the loyalty to and love for Roddy he read in them.

"But that block of stock I've been holding"—he looked at Roddy's precious trees, fighting their daily duel with the smoke of his smelters—"I think I owe you that, Rowdy."

"I guess I'll take it, Buck," said Roddy quietly.



A PLEA FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

ONE of the Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives, Representative John Garner of Texas, is a terror in debate. When he gets warmed up he is a high-speed combination of Flaming Youth, Solomon, Cicero and the Seven Bounding Gordons. Every bit of him goes into action. He paces the aisle. His arms flail the air. His head is the bobbing exclamation point to his emphasis. His voice volleys and thunders. His vocabulary stabs, sears and bruises his opponent. There is not a man on either side of the House who can get the better of him. Best of all, though his jabs are sharp and he spares nobody when he is in the rough and tumble of debate, all the lawmakers like him.

On one occasion in the last session, when he had been unusually oratorical and impressive, he was congratulated by Representative Harrison of Virginia.

"I guess I'll have to watch myself," Garner said, with a laugh. "It's mighty easy to go too far with that sort of highfalutin talk. Years ago a greenhorn congressman did that very thing on this floor. It was when Mike Walsh used to keep the House in a roar with his wit. Walsh was in the chair while the House was in Committee of the Whole on the twenty-first of February, and the matter under consideration was a bill concerning Indian affairs.

"Mr. Chairman and gentlemen," began the greenhorn, 'on this Washington's Birthday eve, we, who are assembled here for the good of the nation, are forcibly reminded of the Father of his Country who fought, bled and labored incessantly, with genius and with great results, for the good of all the States!'

"At that, somebody applauded him, and he paused to take a sip of water and to point to the picture of Washington hanging behind the Speaker's chair.

"Behold," he shouted in a fervor of patriotic emotion, 'that picture yonder! O lips of our first president, speak to us with a reminder of our solemn duty! Nose, whose nostrils have breathed defiance to our country's enemies! Eyes, whose glances were so magnetic, we call for thee and the rest of that noble form to——'

"But he got no farther. Mike Walsh brought down his gavel with a crash and shouted:

"The gentleman is out of order in making the request he does. The ayes and noes cannot be called for in Committee of the Whole!"

The Long Arm o' The Law



By
**James
Edward
Hungerford**

ONE day there drifted down the trail an oddlike-lookin' gent,
Who seemed to be in strength some frail, with shoulders stooped an' bent;
He sat his hoss in careless style, without no show o' pride,
An' on his face he wore no smile—his gloom he could not hide.

His coat was specked with spots o' grease, an' poorly, cheaply made;
His pants were baggin' at the knees, an' also badly frayed;
His boots were run down at the heels, an' both the soles were patched;
He looked like he had missed some meals, an' hunger in 'im hatched!

His hoss it was a scrawny scrub, in looks an' build bereft,
A rawboned, lifeless sort o' dub, without much spirit left.
They shorely made a strangelike pair, as they hove into view;
Us punchers met 'em with a stare, an' nodded, "Howdy'do."

The foreman grinned from ear t' ear, when first he glimpsed the gent,
An' then his mouth curved in a sneer, an' all his humor *went!*
His face turned white; his eyes showed fear; he whirled, as if to run;
For that there stranger-party, queer, *was sightin' down a gun!*

"Stick up yo'r paws!" he slowly drawled. "Don't budge fr'm where you are!"
An' from his scrubby hoss he crawled, an' flashed a shiny *star!*
The foreman gent, he made no fuss—it seems he'd skipped the pen;
An' that there harmless-lookin' cuss—he took 'im back again!



An Eyeful

By
Captain
A.P. Corcoran

Why did Dwight L. Perkins, the "swell," vow to blacken the eyes of Traffic Policeman Maguire? And Maguire the heavyweight champion of the force!

TOM MAGUIRE was feeling both thirsty and ill tempered. The heat of the day had given the traffic cop a headache, and the thunder of the Third Avenue "L" seemed to be driving tin tacks into his brain. If the relief didn't come soon, he was quite sure he would burst somewhere, and that clock in the corner restaurant said he had still seven minutes to go.

Some sixth sense told him it was time to hold up the crosstown traffic and give the other a chance. Not that there was much to bother about at this time of night! He raised his hand with his usual impressive dignity, and then caught a glimpse of a dame shooting farther than she should into the avenue. Just the very thing he wanted!

Fulfilling his own unspoken prophecy about himself, Tom Maguire burst. Verbally, of course, but most explosively.

"Say lissen!" began Mr. Maguire. "Ain't you ever heard of traffic regulations? Why they give licenses——"

He was warming to his work, using all the adjectives he had inherited from a long line of Connaught ancestors, when a hand was laid on his arm, and an icy voice ordered:

"Please do not address a lady in such language on the street—or elsewhere."

It is no insult to Tom Maguire's faculty for repartee to admit that his first comeback was simply a stare. He stared hard but not long, and then his mouth opened, shut with a snap, and reopened to emit more eloquence.

"What in hell——" he began.

"You heard me. I said to stop using such language."

Now Mr. Maguire had placed him. "High-hat," or "hooty," as he would have called it himself. Just the kind of guy he had no earthly use for, even in his most lenient moments; and the fellow was glaring at him, as if he was hungry and would like to eat him.

"Say," growled Mr. Maguire, completing a tirade, "you get yourself out of here and quick, or I'll run you in. Obstructing an officer in the performance of his duty!"

He turned his back to stem and release the traffic again, and was astonished to find that the high-hat had followed him into the middle of the road.

"I should be glad," the guy was saying, "to make a test case of this. Run me in, as you threatened. I shall be only too pleased to accompany you to the station."

A great weariness descended on Tom Maguire. Only a couple of minutes to

go now, before he could repair to the ice box, where Hannah would have something in hiding for him. He knew he could count on Hannah.

"Aw, go home!" he said.

"Certainly not! I have witnesses who will support me. I got the number of that lady's car."

Tom Maguire regarded his antagonist, and noted the wild look still in that eye. Of course, the fellow was drunk, and drunken men could be very obstinate. Would he have to call the patrolman, have the damned fool arrested, and maybe have to go making depositions at the station, when he ought to be reclining on the stoop? He glanced about for some means of escape from this dilemma. On a hot evening, too! Could you beat it? And then came some one along the sidewalk, at sight of whom he could have whooped for joy.

None other than Mary, "the Mangle," herself!

Mary was of the build, temperament and training that would certainly have entitled her to a place in a prize-fight ring. She had gained her title in a wet-wash laundry and from her skill with her fists in defending the small man she now claimed as husband. Many a time had Tom Maguire and other friends on the force saved Mary from a term on the Island. In return, she did them service, when she could.

Tom Maguire walked swiftly to her now, the other following more slowly at his heels.

"Dam pest, drunk, trying to get me to arrest him. Hand him one for me. Mary, will you?"

The high-hat was now close at hand. He was about to open his mouth when, suddenly, something hard as iron connected with fearful impact under his jaw. He felt himself being lifted toward the heavens, and landed on things rubbly. To a loud wail of dismay he lost consciousness of the world.

"Thanks, Mary," said Policeman Maguire to her already retreating form.

"Any little thing to oblige, Tom," said Mary.

"Aw, shut yer trap!" the cop advised a short, swarthy gentleman who was

pointing to his fruit stand and bewailing the fate of his "banaan."

The relief came in sight.

"Night," said Tom Maguire to his successor, and, satisfied, went home. Lucky that the Avenue had been almost empty. Might have been awkward, if strangers had been about. The regular denizens would know enough to have seen nothing.

WHEN Mr. Perkins recovered his grasp on things mundane, he had much ado to imagine where he was. His feet were sticking straight up in the air. His body was wedged in a kind of box. When he put his hands out, they grasped a nice assortment of fruit. He slid to the ground and was followed by a cascade of apples, oranges, bananas, and other edibles. Before him stood a vociferous, dark person, demanding compensation.

"What did you say?" demanded Dwight Perkins, patting the place where the ache was worst.

"Moocha mon' it cost me. Looka—my——" He pointed to the scattered fruits.

Mr. Perkins, getting a firmer grip on his memory, glanced at the roadway, where a strange form was now standing guard over the traffic. Was he crazy?

"See here. How did I get in your damned fruit stand?"

But the gentleman whose generic name was Tony, suddenly grew silent.

"You must know. Come on."

"Me no here then. No, me no here." He repeated it to make sure of his future line of defense.

Mr. Perkins summoned the cop from his post, and told his story as well as he could remember it.

"You say the last man on duty here hit you clear into the stand?"

"No, no. It was a woman hit me. I am sure of that."

It had been a woman. He was sure of that now, but, when he caught the policeman's peculiar smile, he was by no means sure he should have been so candid. Didn't sound so good, come to think of it. Knocked out by a woman!

"If you can describe her! Some one

who has a—a grudge against you, perhaps?”

The fellow was too smooth, altogether, and Dwight Perkins was sure he had caught Tony in the act of winking warningly.

“There will be more trouble about this,” he said, feeling baffled and enraged. “Who was the last man here on duty?”

“Couldn’t say, sir, I’m sure.”

There was nothing to do but march off with such dignity as he could muster.

Though Dwight Perkins’ jaw was aching severely at this moment, it had nothing on either his heart or his pride. He began to rehearse his troubles, as he stalked off now into the side street that would lead to his home in the Forties. There was no doubt but he was justified in laying them all at the door of Miss Madge McGilligan, the lady who but an hour or so ago had refused to become his wife. He could scarcely believe it yet.

The daughter of a man whose family had so recently left Ellis Island that you could get the aroma of bog on his tongue, to turn down the descendant of pioneers who must at least have known the famous *Mayflower* passengers!

“The last woman I should have picked for a wife!” Mr. Perkins now tried to console himself, and he recollected that, indeed, he had once shuddered at the idea of introducing her to his Connecticut aunts.

But then came a vision of Madge’s gray-green eyes and her shiny hair and her up-tilted nose, and a horrible pang shot through him. Should he go and plead with her again? McGilligan’s daughter—McGilligan, district attorney of New York City, where he himself had but recently acquired a comparatively insignificant position as an assistant district attorney in the homicide bureau! It was his chief who had introduced Madge and him, by accident. He would never, Perkins felt, have done it by design, for somehow they two did not hit it off, personally. What it was, he found it very difficult indeed to say. There was something he could not fathom

that kept them apart. Could he have heard the conversation in the McGilligan home now, he might have been enlightened.

“So you’ve turned him down, ducky?”

“Of course. You wanted me to.”

“As if you ever did what I wanted! But you were right, my lamb.” She was his only girl and total family, and he was jealous for her future. “You were right. He’s got what I call an ‘in-growing crust.’ It starts with the manners and only stops at the brain. Sort of visible petrification. If he’s this way now, what will he be at forty?”

“Don’t, dad. Sounds as if I might have been kissing a museum piece of the year twenty thousand. Skull found in the hills of what is supposed to have been the seaboard city of Boston.”

She laughed, trying to be light, but her heart was heavy, for she believed there was more in Dwight than her father had ever seen. Look at the athlete he was! Drew no distinctions between four-ounce gloves and golf clubs, and no slouch in handling both. No, he might have a superficial crust, but there must be real sap running underneath. Perhaps she could have—— But she had turned him down. She sighed.

“I suppose we never would have got on, if he’s as you say.”

She looked so sad that her adoring parent was disturbed.

“If he’s got anything in him, why don’t he show it?” growled District Attorney McGilligan. “With his la-di-da airs!”

Damn the fellow! Why had he come here upsetting the happy status quo? He felt he hated Dwight Perkins for life; and at the moment Mr. Perkins was reciprocating the feeling sincerely.

He knew now why he had lit into that cop—he who loathed scenes on the street. He had just left the McGilligan home, convinced that Madge had refused him by order of her father. He had turned in a daze into Third Avenue, conscious only of a hearty detestation for all Irishmen and all persons connected with police departments. He had wanted in some obscure way to get even. And he had got an aching jaw!

"But by gosh, that fellow will pay for it! I'll find him again, if I have to search the whole force." He felt no animus against the unknown woman who had hit him, except, perhaps, on the score of her sex. If it had been a man, he could have discussed the matter apropos of the need for weeding out the police force, and so could have given vent to his temper. As it was, he must keep mum.

ALL next day Dwight L. Perkins did his work with such an expression on his face and such a tone in his voice as made his associates view him askance and keep their distance. The evening found him wandering Third Avenue just at the time his most recently acquired enemy should be on his beat.

Traffic Cop Tom Maguire was there.

"I wasn't going crazy," said Mr. Perkins to himself, as he strode to the center of the street. "I remember his ugly face quite well."

He touched the apparently unconcerned policeman on the arm with considerable firmness.

"Officer, I wish to speak to you."

Mr. Maguire, whose keen eyes had already caught a glimpse of him on the sidewalk, felt that uncanny sensation in the pit of his stomach which comes to the squeamish in a swiftly descending elevator. The bottom of it, as he told his wife afterward, seemed to be dropping out of it, for he knew now that the high-hat had not been drunk after all. But the fighting blood in his veins rose quickly to the occasion, stimulating his well-known "gall."

"Yeh?" said he, and indifferently waved on an advancing truck.

"You know me, all right," asserted Mr. Perkins. "We might as well get down to brass tacks."

At this juncture a patrolman approached the two.

"Know you?" Mr. Maguire was temporizing, and he looked at the other. "Can't exactly say that, but I've seen you. Yeh, I've seen you."

Mr. Perkins permitted himself to smile.

"If you hadn't been on duty last

night, when you insulted that lady, perhaps you wouldn't be able to see so well. It would have given me great pleasure to shut both your eyes. As it was, I couldn't."

The patrolman, within earshot, emitted a laugh.

"What's the racket, Tom? Shut your eyes, would he? Shut the eyes of the champion heavyweight of the New York police force? Say, take it from me, buddy, you've got your work cut out for you and then some, if you want to do that."

"Shut up, Dinny, and be making yourself scarce," advised Maguire.

Dinny backed away, puzzled, and the two resumed their scrutiny of each other. Lanky guy, this was, Tom Maguire was thinking; but those arms of his had a reach, and his shoulders looked square and sturdy. That wasn't the cut of his coat either, Tom was confident. He could tell, for he was accustomed to appraising men. His gaze traveled down the lean length of leg, and he noted the easy stance of the other.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked, at last.

"I want to identify you this evening. For reasons of my own, I won't report on last night's affair." He sensed a certain relief in the traffic cop, at this announcement. "But you're going to pay for it. Get me? I'm not quite sure just how, yet. Good-by."

Before he went, he let his gaze travel insolently over the traffic cop, taking him in from head to foot. So discomfited was Mr. Maguire that he forgot his usual caution when he went home and confided the full facts to his wife.

"Aw! didn't I tell you, woman, he said he wouldn't report me?" He tried to still her wails at the tale.

"Wisha, Tom, how often have I told ye ye'd have to learn to keep hold of yer temper? It's got ye into trouble enough, and it'll get ye into more. Mark my words!"

"Stop yer jawing," said Tom.

Of course, she was right, but why rub it in? Didn't he know it, himself?

For days Mr. Maguire went about his affairs with an air of preoccupation,

which betokened the one emotion he found hard to endure. Suspense! If only the fellow would show his hand, he'd be happy. Tom Maguire could face anything except a ghost. He would have been consoled, if he had known the state of his new enemy's feelings, for Mr. Perkins was really almost as disturbed as he.

Dwight had made a threat, and he must carry it out. But how? He could hardly ask a policeman to meet him in a back lot, and hammer him or be hammered himself. More likely the latter, for his contemptuous scrutiny of Tom had shown him at least two hundred pounds of well-trained beef and bone.

AND then one day came the cause of all the trouble—no other than Miss Madge McGilligan herself.

Dwight was sitting in an anteroom, awaiting audience with the chief. In his hand was a leaflet announcing the annual boxing tournament of the New York police department. The winners in the different classes would, as usual, meet the respective champions of their type from the London force. The international contest would be held this year in New York. He was but dimly taking in the details, when he became aware of her presence. A certain fragrance warned him first. How well he knew it! It had always reminded him subtly of his native woods in spring. He turned sharply, thinking himself deceived, and caught her gazing at him.

"Eh—ah—good morning!" He went to her, and saw that she was flushing in a way he had never seen before. She couldn't possibly be shy.

"How are you?" she said primly. "I'm waiting to get at dad, if I can. He forgot something he promised me last night."

So distracted he was at sight of her, that he could think of nothing to say. It was she who pointed to the leaflet in his hand.

"You'll be at the tournament, of course? Dad is bringing me this year. He's awfully keen on boxing. He likes the heavyweight contests best, but he says this one won't be much to see,

because Maguire will walk over every one, as usual."

She was talking on at random, trying to ease the awkwardness of the meeting. The one thing that registered in his mind outside of herself was the name Maguire. He had made it his business to find out the name of the traffic cop on that famous or fatal Third Avenue corner.

"You're interested in boxing?" he heard himself asking.

"Aren't you?" she challenged.

"Oh—ah, yes. Yes, of course." He had never seen her as nervous as she was now, and it struck him how terribly feminine she could be, in a way flattering to masculine conceit. Trying to conciliate him, was she?

Maguire's figure interposed between them. So Maguire was going to walk over everybody as usual, was he? And she was interested in boxing!

"Perhaps," she ventured, and now she was blushing again, "you'd like to come with dad and me to see the fights? We'd be glad——"

Preoccupied with his own ideas, he answered without premeditation.

"I'm afraid——"

Some one called:

"Mr. McGilligan will see you now, sir."

"Don't let me keep you," said Madge McGilligan, coldly.

He awoke to the exigencies of the situation.

"This lady wishes to see Mr. McGilligan," he said.

In a kind of haze he saw the attendant smilingly lead her in. They all knew her down here, and who could help loving her? With tightened lips and high head, she acknowledged his courtesy and tripped past him. When she came out, a few seconds later, she pretended not to see him. He wanted to rush after her and explain, but there was that damned attendant again, holding the door open for him to enter the Presence.

"Gosh, what an ass I am! What must she think of me?" Dwight Perkins' brain came repeating these remarks the while he transacted business with his chief.

It was done with due formality on

either side, but it seemed, to the heated imagination of the junior, that McGilligan's face wore a smirk of triumph. Of course, the old boy thought he had downed him. So Maguire, this fellow, was going to walk over every one, as usual, at the tournament. To Dwight Perkins, his private fight with Tom Maguire was beginning to be symbolic of his silent war with the district attorney. Tom Maguire was going to be heavyweight champion of the police force, and McGilligan and his daughter were going to see him carry off his easy honors.

"Good morning!" said Mr. McGilligan, suddenly, indicating that the business was done.

Dwight Perkins rose stiffly and departed. His brain was seething. They said afterward in the office that he had acted strange that day, and no one was surprised to hear, some time later, that he had gone off hastily on the doctor's orders.

"Your young man, ducky," reported Mr. McGilligan to his daughter, one evening over dinner, "has gone away for the good of his gizzard or something. Maybe it's only golfitis. I don't know. Couldn't even stick a job more than a couple of months," he added, disgustedly. "You're very well out of that mess, ducky."

Whether Miss McGilligan agreed or not, she did not say. She had made no mention of the invitation which her late suitor had so abruptly turned down. Dad was right, of course. The fellow had no spirit. Better forget him. He was already apparently forgetting her.

So a month went by with no untoward incident; and there came an evening when Hannah Maguire, tending her spouse at a special light supper, remarked:

"I hope you don't get a black eye, Tom. Well, you needn't be so uppish. You got one once, and it looks so bad to the neighbors who don't know."

"Have sense, woman," counseled Tom. "Get me eye blacked by one of those spalpeens. I wonder what they'll send us from London this time?"

He preened himself, as he departed, tasting in anticipation the triumph of this

evening and sniffing more important battles from afar.

NOW there are three kinds of fight fans, broadly speaking. There are those who will go to see only the professional pugs, declaring that here and here alone can science be seen. There are those who plumb for amateur bouts, opining that only amateurs are "on the level." And there are those who want simply to see a scrap, not being particular who puts it up.

It was the last-named class that flocked to the great Garden this evening, convinced they would get value for their money. For the contestants would be cops, mostly Irish, out for glory, not only on their personal behalf, but eventually on behalf of their city against strangers. Cops, indeed, there were in profusion this evening, some fighting in the ring, some fighting for a chance to see the ring, and some to hold in check the swarming crowds.

Gay posters on the outside hoardings and about the Garden walls gave all pertinent details about the coming entertainment.

Three classes were to be represented to-night—middleweight, light heavyweight, and heavyweight. There would be two bouts in each class, the winners to meet in a final, and the final victor to represent the New York City police department against that of London at a later date.

Formally attired city officials filled most of the ringside seats, the somber black and white of their evening clothes relieved by a sprinkling of more colorful feminine attire. District Attorney McGilligan and his daughter were among the early arrivals, and on his right sat the commissioner of police. While they talked "shop," Madge's eyes were roaming the rows of chairs. Was it possible that he did not take enough pride in his present profession to attend an affair of this kind? And she had told him she would be there, too! A vague hope she had been cherishing died abruptly, and she dropped her gaze down to her program.

"Dad, look!" A name had caught her

attention, and she pointed it out to her parent.

Traffic Officer Maguire, Champion
vs.
Special Reserve Officer Perkins

So read an announcement in the heavy-weight class.

"Yes? What about it? Oh, the name, you mean?" He gave a short laugh. "Not an uncommon one, ducky, but the one we know that carries it isn't likely to be in any ring with a cop. Anyway, he's out of town."

Madge's sigh was inaudible. She was afraid this evening would be a bore.

The bouts were beginning now. Garden habitués missed the stentorian tones of Joe Humphries, but who cared whether the announcer could be heard or not? Up and at 'em, boys! A thrill to every second! That is what this crowd wanted and also what it got.

No professional stalling here, no cagy ring craft, no taking the count for breath. Every man out to win. Toe to toe, trading blows. The fans loved it. No razzing from the gentlemen up near the roof. Winner or loser got an equally vociferous ovation. Even Madge caught the contagion of the enthusiasm. They were fine chaps, these cops, well trained, clean of limb, clear eyed. And he couldn't bother to come and see them! Of course, dad was right.

A husky light heavyweight sent a murdering straight left to his opponent's nose. Madge knew a sudden revulsion of feeling. Ugh! it was ugly, after all. The fight was stopped. A broken nose! After all, it was brutal. Maybe Dwight Perkins was right.

The announcer called out the details of the heavyweight bout.

She could see them coming along the aisles, each man alone, unattended by the usual train of seconds. The same batch had to do for all fighters to-night, and they did not leave the corners.

THE men climbed into the ring, Maguire, the big champion, bringing a thunder of cheers from all sides. The other was received in silence. Madge

looked up at him, and her small fingers dug into her father's arm. He turned to her.

"Dad, dad! It's he!"

"Who's he? What ails you, girl?"

But Mr. McGilligan looked, too, and then a fervent exclamation escaped him. "Well, I'm damned!"

For it was Dwight L. Perkins himself right there in the arena. The commissioner was talking now.

"So that's what he wanted it for? See that young chap there? He came to me about a month ago, asking to be enrolled as a special reserve officer. Fine young fellow! We need the type."

"Do we?" thundered Mr. McGilligan. "Why, he's one of my assistants. Now what in—what on earth does he think he's up to?"

Mr. McGilligan's shrewd judgment was, for once, at a loss, but he could see Mary's eyes were shining. He settled himself more comfortably in his seat.

"Well," he said, "being in the homicide bureau, he knows all about murder. He'll feel it to-night, if I'm not mistaken."

His daughter glared at him.

"Don't be too sure," she advised, sharply. "You forget he was a Rhodes scholar and the only American ever to win the Oxford-Cambridge championship."

The ring was empty but for the two men sitting in their corners. As amateurs, they were trusted to play the game. The referee remained outside. Maguire was nodding to friends in the house. As yet, he had failed to recognize his unknown opponent, but he was quite confident the force could produce no one capable of even bruising his skin.

The gong sounded, and they advanced to shake hands. Maguire towered, a great tree of a man, but supple as a willow, for all his strength. He had a two-inch advantage in height over his antagonist, who was a bare six feet. A slimmer man, this, too, but with a splendid breadth of shoulder and reach of arm.

"A second Bob Fitzsimmons," the quick-thinking Irishman was deciding,

"without the freckles, the bald head or the funny feet that made him look always as if he was walking on his ankles."

"Hullo, Maguire," he heard the fellow saying. "Now how about those black eyes I promised you?"

Five weeks it was now, since Maguire had seen that face. He had forgotten about it and the incident.

They dropped arms, fell into position; but the shock of recognition had blanked the traffic cop's brain. A looping right to the eye did not help to restore its faculties. He half staggered, half stepped back, but not quickly enough to avoid getting another in the same spot. His back was against the ropes. Automatically, he covered up.

"But that guy was a high-hat. How does he come to be a cop?"

A stiff left to the stomach banished all reflection, and he lowered his guard. Over came that looping right again.

"That's one closed," he heard. "Now for the other!"

Maguire could sense the gallery's disapproval. They were calling him a "poor harp" and a "boob." He ducked a left swing and stuck out his own left. He felt himself losing his temper. Now he mustn't do that. Came a flip of slack glove across his now sore eye, and he threw all caution to the winds, tearing into his smaller antagonist.

But his wrath availed him nothing against this cool boxer. Perkins slipped or ducked every rush made, and even occasionally managed to jab a stiff left to the face. The round ended with Perkins ahead on points.

Down in his ringside seat, Mr. McGilligan was gazing, goggle eyed, at the astonishing spectacle of his "la-di-da" assistant calmly submitting to the ministration of his seconds.

"Dad, wasn't he great?" Madge was gurgling, as she tried unsuccessfully to catch the eye of her late lover.

Dwight Perkins had seen them both long ago. He could see Madge's shining eyes now, but he would not meet them with his own. Wait until the battle was over! If Maguire got into his stride, it might not be so easily won.

"He'll be having me on my back, if I

don't look out," Maguire was thinking. Could you tie it? That high-hat to be so nifty with his hands and feet!

THEY danced about each other in the next round. Maguire, cooler, began to show the stuff that had made him undisputed champion of the force. This was as pretty a bout as any boxing fan could hope to see.

Perkins led his long left to the eye, intent on closing it. Maguire slipped, and drove a terrific right to the ribs. The blow hurt, and Perkins skipped back lightly, Maguire following.

Suddenly, the former skipped in again. This time he got home his glove to the right eye and a short right to the heart, but in return he took a right and left to the head. He fell back on his heels, dizzy. Before he could recover, a thunderous right to the breastbone put him sprawling on his back in the corner. He managed to get to his feet quickly, and they fell into a clinch.

A sharp order from the ringside to break away, and the men parted clean.

They sparred. Maguire rushed. Perkins side-stepped, and drove a stinging right to the ear. He followed the cop to the ropes, where he kept tapping him like a cat playing with a mouse, all the time trying to reach the eye. He had the satisfaction of seeing it discolored.

That satisfied him, to a certain extent, but he knew he was tiring fast. Now Maguire pushed him off, and began popping lefts to the face. Then, feinting, he shot home a right to the heart. Perkins' knees bent beneath him, and he sank to the canvas. At the count of seven the gong saved him.

"Dad, he's hurt. Some one ought to go to him." Madge's hand was now clutching her father's arm; but he hardly heeded her, for once.

"That fellow can fight. By gosh! he can fight and take it, too," he was saying, half to himself.

Maguire was echoing these sentiments.

At the beginning of the third and final round, the two shook hands.

"Did it," said Perkins, indicating the half-closed eye of the cop, and he smiled with puffed lips.

"You sure did," acknowledged Maguire, good naturedly.

They fell to. Perkins took punishment about the body, any amount of it. He felt decidedly groggy. Instead of rushing now, Maguire got on his toes and danced in and out like a fencing master. He was making Perkins do all the work, and wearing him down.

Light blows were exchanged, and then the men stood toe to toe, swapping punches. Soon Perkins was backing up. He stepped back, as if to measure his man, and the cop sent home a killing right to the jaw. Perkins dropped slowly, heavily, like a shot bird. And Maguire stood over him, gazing down, but with no sign of elation.

At the word "Out!" he stooped, and raised his antagonist.

"Hey!" he shouted to the seconds, who were already coming forward with water. He himself administered it. The eyes opened, blinked, and Dwight Perkins once more came back to life. His distorted face managed to smile.

"Got your eye, though, Maguire."

"Got more than that, sir. Toughest fight I've ever had to put up."

Perkins was on his feet now, and, solicitously escorted by Maguire, he walked across the ring and crawled through the ropes. There, awaiting him, was a trio, at sight of whom Maguire automatically saluted. He would have gone away, but Perkins' grip was on his arm.

"So that's what you wanted to be enrolled as reserve officer for, eh, Perkins?" The commissioner was saying. "Thought you could knock out my best man!"

A profuse perspiration, not entirely due to the evening's proceedings, broke out on the "best man's" brow.

"Only a little private bet, sir, that I couldn't black his eye. I've done it, you see."

Maguire mumbled. Gosh, this high-hat was a real guy! He felt ashamed of himself, but there was no chance to talk, for District Attorney McGilligan was talking.

"Well, well, let me shake your hand, my boy. Don't know if it's quite the thing for an assistant district attorney

of the homicide bureau to be attempting a little murdering of his own. Nearly had you going, didn't he, officer?"

"You bet!" said Maguire. "Nearly had me going."

To Hannah that night, he confided contritely: "He might have had me gone, woman. Gone for good! And here I am talking to the commissioner, himself. Well, well, it's a queer world."

But just at this moment, all he was aware of was a slackening of the grip on his arm. The high-hat was holding his hand out to a girl. Dainty little thing! And she was looking at him—Well, Maguire turned his gaze away. So did the commissioner and the district attorney, who seemed suddenly to have much to say to each other. Mr. Maguire decided to fade out of the picture. The fellow was obviously quite capable now of finding his dressing room without aid. He did find it eventually, indeed; and those rubbing him down and administering other restoratives were at a loss to understand how any beaten boxer could be so cheerful in defeat. Why, the fellow was actually whistling! They were no more astonished, however, than Mary, the Mangle, who, at Maguire's instigation, sought out, a couple of days later, the office of the district attorney to explain her part in a proceeding that had taken place some five weeks before.

"You needn't be afraid of him, Mary," her friend, Tom Maguire, explained. "He's a regular guy. I'd just like to let him know we're all on the level for the future. Get me?"

"Sure, I get you, Tom. I'll go."

"Blame me as much as you like, Mary. Tell him everything. He'll be sure to understand."

It was Mary who failed to do the understanding. In fact, she went away from the district attorney's office in a kind of happy haze. No, he couldn't listen to her explanation. He just knew why she had acted as she had. Would she just take this and go? He was busy. Mary went, and only on the street did she discover that she was clasping in her large palm a fifty-dollar bill. Should she go back with it? She remembered the look in his eye.

"Sure, the lad's happy," she decided. "We did something for him, though it beats me what it was."

That fifty would put her and her small husband beyond the reach of the financial worry that was so trying to her temper.

WHEN Policeman Tom Maguire won his expected victory, somewhat later, over a London "bobby," there was no more enthusiastic fan than Dwight L. Perkins to cheer him on.

And when Dwight L. Perkins married the district attorney's daughter, Madge, Tom Maguire, specially enlisted for the occasion, saw to it that the way from the fashionable church was more than usually clear of obtruding crowds. He

was the only one the bride remembered to smile at, as she came out into the sun on the arm of her husband. Tom appreciated that.

"Just like a little flower," said Hannah Maguire that night to her own man, sentimentally. "Just like a flower, she was. Ain't he lucky?"

"Eh?" said Tom. "He lucky! What about her?"

"Sure, couldn't she have got anybody she had her eye on?"

"Have sense, woman!"

"Mind yer temper, Tom," counseled his wife.

And Tom minded it, to the extent of making his remarks inaudible. What he said—but to himself—was:

"Shut yer trap."



HOW TO WATER A LAWN

ALTHOUGH sprinkling the lawn is one of our leading American outdoor sports in the hot summer months, not one in a dozen able-bodied handlers of the hose knows how to keep the grass green during a prolonged drought. George Stephens, the North Carolina capitalist and publisher, explains why, in a story he tells about James B. Duke, one of the millionaire Dukes of tobacco-manufacturing fame.

Duke built a handsome home with extensive grounds in Myers Park, a residential section which Stephens developed on the outskirts of Charlotte, North Carolina. One summer there was a prolonged dry spell, during which the lawns in Myers Park dried up and presented a cooked appearance in spite of the fact that their owners put the hose on them every evening. The Duke lawn was the only one which, in defiance of drought and burning sun, remained a rich, velvety green.

Finally the neighbors, mystified by this apparent overturning of the laws of nature, threw down their sprinklers and repaired to Mr. Duke for information.

"It's very simple," he told them. "How long do you gentleman water your grass?"

"Half an hour every evening," one of them replied; "sometimes perhaps forty or fifty minutes."

"Precisely," Duke commented. "That's your trouble. You water yours every evening for half an hour or so, while I sprinkle mine once a week. But, when I put my sprinklers to work, I keep them at it all night. The result is that this watering is like a long, steady rain; the water wets the roots of the grass thoroughly and soaks deeper into the ground, where it remains for days as a reservoir of dampness from which the grass draws the moisture necessary to offset the onslaughts of the sun's rays.

"But you, with your half-hour sprinkling, make no inroads upon the dryness. Either the water you scatter evaporates during the night, or, if any is left in the morning, it is just enough to enable the hot sun to bake the ground hard, with no moisture remaining under the hardened surface. Your system helps to kill the grass."

A Chat With You

ORIGINALLY, if we are to believe the scientists, our ancestors lived in the woods. A little later they took to living in caves. Still later, growing stronger and bolder, tribe by tribe they took to the open and began to hunt the animals that once had hunted them. The story of mankind is like the story of most great and successful men. They start at the bottom and work up as near the top as they can.

* * * *

SOME genius, long forgotten but worthy of a statue or monument if his identity could be found, was original enough to grasp a wild horse by the mane and vault on his back. He probably had a bad half hour at the first, but at the finish he must have been the master. You can see the modern reflection of this ancient triumph of mankind at any rodeo. And when they yell, "Ride him, cowboy!" they are echoing the shouts of the cave-men when they thrilled at the spectacle of the first horse breaker in the world. The modern cowboy has saddle and stirrups, spurs and bit. But he has a bigger horse to tame. The first horse, "the little Eohippus," was not much bigger than a fox, and it is unlikely that the first horse tamed by man was as big as a modern polo pony. Horses who live by grazing do not grow as large or become as spirited as those who get oats or other grain.

* * * *

TAMING the sheep so that he could be driven in herds was distinctly a tame occupation. The dog, as far as can be known, came of his own accord to make friends with man. He needed no taming. He wanted to be friends. As for the first man who milked a cow—

he was a genius in his own way. But the first man who fought a bull and tamed him was the hero of all the prehistoric tribes, and his cult still persists in the cruel sport, bull fighting, as practiced in Spain, Mexico and South American countries. It is a curious fact that, while the taming of cattle probably took place somewhere in Central Asia, the people who streamed east from the tableland down into India made them sacred animals and worshiped them. The people who went west down the long steppes of Russia into Europe made the animals beasts of burden and ate them.

* * * *

THESE occupations kept men outdoors and in the open air. They remained with those outdoor tastes till the fall of the Roman civilization and the beginning of the Dark Ages. Then, in a period of anarchy, they were forced to herd in cities or towns to escape death from wild animals or robbers worse than the animals. The beginning of manufacture on a large and larger scale, drew more and more people to the cities. Commerce made the cities bigger and took the men away from the farms. The cities are growing yet, but there is nothing quite so sure in this world as change, and some time the tide will turn and folks will go back in increasing numbers to the land.

* * * *

FIVE out of ten young people in the country would like to go to the city they have heard so much about, but nine out of ten city men have a concealed hankering for the open fields, that they are sometimes ashamed to admit. Half the popularity of golf is that it gives so much the same reactions as shooting birds over

a good setter. We wish, just at this season of the year, we could present every reader of *THE POPULAR* at least a week in the woods, at sea, or on the open ranges of the Far West. We are doing our best in the next issue.

* * * *

FOR instance, the complete book that opens the issue, "South o' The Wolves," by Holman Day, has for its setting the wind-swept coast of Nova Scotia. If you like the taste of salt spray on

your lips, the clean sea wind in your nostrils and the throb of a big motor boat in your ears, sail with Holman. If you want to get to the sun-drenched New Mexican mesas, go there with Dane Coolidge. Do you like the North Woods? Clay Perry is a good guide. And for the Canadian West, there is Bertrand Sinclair to point your way. If you want to get out of the city, take the next number of this magazine. If you are out of the city and read it, it will help you to have a still better time.

The Popular Magazine

In the Next Number, September 7, 1927

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BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

In the Windigo Wind

CLAY PERRY

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